

LOCKPORT

State moves to block abandonment of radioactive-waste site

From staff and wire reports

ALBANY — The state attorney general's office is stepping in to block the abandonment of a radioactive-waste site at a former steel plant in Lockport and wants the federal government to take responsibility for cleaning it up.

State officials plan to be in a Pittsburgh bankruptcy court today to oppose a motion by the property's trustee to abandon 9.1 contaminated acres of the

former Guterl Steel Corp. property.

Guterl Steel, formerly known as Simonds Steel, manufactured uranium rods and milled thorium under contract with the federal Atomic Energy Commission from 1948 to 1956. Other hazardous wastes were dumped on the site in subsequent years.

In a letter Saturday, state Attorney General Dennis C. Vacco asked U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno to intervene personally in the matter. There was no immediate comment from Reno's office.

Vacco noted that an inspection earlier this year by the federal Environmental Protection Agency determined that radioactivity from the site may pose a danger to workers at the nearby Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corp. plant.

The radioactive contamination raised problems with the sale of the 70-acre steel mill to Allegheny Ludlum after Guterl went bankrupt in 1982. Allegheny Ludlum eventually bought most of the property, but the contaminated portion was retained by Guterl.

Vacco wants the remaining \$1.3 mil-

lion of Guterl Steel Corp.'s holdings to be used for an environmental study and cleanup of the site. The trustee wants to turn it over to the federal Economic Development Administration, which had guaranteed the company's mortgage on the site.

The EDA, represented by the Justice Department, opposed requests by the bankruptcy trustee in 1992 and 1994 to use Guterl's funds for an environmental study.

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