

# The Bee

KEN-TON'S NEWSPAPER

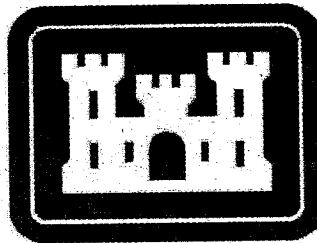
## More sampling to be done at Tonawanda Landfill

by JILL SCHMELZER  
Editor

The Town of Tonawanda Landfill is believed to be one of the sites of the World War II Manhattan Project, when the first atomic bomb was created.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed a risk assessment of the area to determine if its aftereffects are contaminating the soil, putting nearby residents at an increased risk of developing cancer.

The 55-acre site, located in the northwest corner of the town and along Hackett Drive in the City of Tonawanda, showed acceptable levels of radioactivity according to the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act, which was passed in 1980, representatives from the Corps of Engineers said.



CERCLA was established in response to the discovery of a large number of abandoned, leaking hazardous waste sites that posed a serious health threat to humans and the environment.

Testing at the landfill began in 2001, after results from the nearby Linde site showed evidence it should be included in the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program.

The Linde site, which is now the Praxair property on Sheridan Drive, is located about one mile south of the landfill, making it a target for soil testing, said Stephen P. Buechi, an environmental engineer of the Buffalo District corps.

The initial findings from the landfill were released last summer to members of the public, which showed an acceptable baseline risk assessment of the probability a person in direct contact with the radioactive materials would develop cancer.

The risk assessment is based on the increased chance of developing cancer because of the contaminants in the

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soil. The scale of acceptable risk is based between one in a million and one in 10,000. If it measures a greater risk, for instance one in 9,999, then action must be taken to lower the risk.

Because results showed the levels at the landfill were right at the one on 10,000 limit, the corps' proposed plan recommended no action.

"There were spots with an increased level of radioactivity," Buechi said, noting that all soil has some levels of radioactivity in it, however, specific spots of the landfill show increased levels of it.

"Because it is still in the acceptable range, the proposed plan recommends no action be taken at the site," Buechi said.

Part of the remedial action program advocates for a public comment period after the proposed plan is released. Residents of Hackett Drive and surrounding

### Facts

- Tonawanda Landfill was designated into FUSRAP as a vicinity property to the Linde Site by the Department of Energy in 1992.
- Small areas of the soil exhibit elevated levels of radium, thorium and uranium, however there is no evidence as to where it comes from or how it was placed on the landfill.
- The risk assessment of the increased probability of developing cancer is calculated by exposure multiplied by toxicity.
- For more information, visit [www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/risk/commeng.htm](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/risk/commeng.htm) or [www.lrb.usace.army.mil](http://www.lrb.usace.army.mil).

areas made comments, which prompted the corps to go back and verify the original findings by taking additional samples of the soil, said Lt. Col. John S. Hurley of the Corps of Engineers.

"Many members of the public made great comments," he said, noting that the process weighs

heavily on public involvement.

"It's proof to me that our system didn't predetermine anything," Hurley said. "It's about any member of the community that makes a great comment to make us further test. It's not about people claiming they've influenced the system somehow."

New soil samples will be taken for a one- to two-month time period in late summer and early fall. Instrumentation detected radioactivity at 12 feet deep in the initial samples, Buechi said.

"Early planning determines where we need to sample, how deep we should go and how many places within the landfill (should receive additional testing)," he said.

Increased sampling will be taken along the fence line of Hackett Drive where the residential neighborhood abuts the landfill, Buechi said, noting that samples will be taken five days a week, weather permitting.

Previous sampling showed the closest increased levels of radioactivity to the residential

properties at 50 feet from the fence line.

"It is possible for the material to be transported through surface water or deeper contamination through groundwater transportation," Buechi said, noting that this is a primary reason why additional sampling will be conducted.

"We're looking along the fence line," he said, adding that there is currently no evidence that radioactive contaminants are being transported into the groundwater of the residential back yards.

"It is a concern of the residents, so that is an area to target," he said.

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