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Do you bury it ... or ship it?**Town's nuclear waste dilemma: Kirk 'in middle'****By Joseph C. Genco**
Staff writer

- The community has stated the only acceptable resolution of the problem of radioactive waste in the Town of Tonawanda is total removal.

- Department of Energy officials have stated they will approve no resolution that is not cost effective.

- Those same DOE officials have said they will approve no solution that is unsatisfactory to the community.

If that sounds confusing, it is. If it sounds like a dilemma, it is. And DOE Project Manager Ronald Kirk is squarely in the middle.

"We are trying to find an effective and cost effective solution," Mr. Kirk said. "The people are unconcerned about anything but total removal."

One possible alternative is to treat some of the waste locally to reduce the volume that must then be shipped elsewhere.

Kirk said studies on whether that would work are due back from laboratories in late March or early April. If it proves there is a successful way to reduce the volume of waste which must be shipped to Utah for disposal, it's believed the cost of complete excavation and removal could be greatly reduced.

Mr. Kirk bristles at the suggestion the lab tests were expected sooner.

"There was no schedule, no schedule in place," he said.

"We can still talk. The DOE does not see a need to take any immediate action because there is no imminent health hazard. The property owners and state are both aware what is on the property and the people in the community are not in contact with the hazardous waste."

With that in mind, Mr. Kirk said the DOE is unwavering in its request for more dialogue.

"We have to talk about potential alternatives," he said. "Right now the line has been drawn — all or nothing."

"The DOE is committed to protective and cost effective alternatives."

Mr. Kirk has been working on the four Tonawanda sites since 1991. They represent half of his workload of eight sites.

"From a project management standpoint, it's hard to reach closure," of the issue, he said. "The DOE won't implement options the community doesn't like."

"We have plenty of time to talk because there is no immediate hazard."