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Clean-up criteria?

Citizens group in town raises questions about how, and to what standards, nuclear cleanup will be done

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The decision to begin work on clean-up of radioactive waste in the Town of Tonawanda has been met with reserved optimism from the

group, "For a Clean Tonawanda Site," which calls itself FACTS.

The plan announced by the Department of Energy (DOE) last week, involves work to clean three buildings, demolish a fourth and dispose

of the resulting waste out-of state.

FACTS is concerned, however, that the announcement does not address what criteria will be used for the clean-up, DOE's or New York State's. The State's criteria is 10 times as stringent as that of the DOE.

The buildings represent one of four sites contaminated by waste remaining from the Manhattan Project of WWII.

FACTS and another group, Citizens Against Nuclear Material in Tonawanda, (CANIT), have advocated the removal of all wastes as the preferred remedy.

The current action, while greeted enthusiastically, actually represents a departure from the plan preferred by community members and rejected by the DOE, the removal of all wastes.

That plan, rejected as too costly, would require the demolition of all four buildings.

CANIT in March adopted a resolution stating it would accept a gradual, staged clean-up of the properties only if the DOE made a commitment to dispose of all waste out-of-state.

Even with the current move by the DOE, it is still unclear exactly what federal commitment has been made.

FACTS concluded in its release that, "with these and other questions unanswered and lacking completion of the require Environmental Impact Statement decision process for the total site, the propriety of such an 'interim' action is questionable.