



CITY OF TONAWANDA: DEC to test sump pumps

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— Six months after receiving the request, the state has said that it will conduct sump pump tests on the property of some City of Tonawanda homes that border the Town of Tonawanda landfill.

Edwin E. Dassatti, director of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Division of Solid and Hazardous Materials, notified 4th Ward Councilman Rick Davis of the DEC's decision in a letter dated Jan. 9. Davis in July asked the DEC to test residents' sump pumps.

The DEC did not acknowledge Davis' second request, which was to have soil samples taken.

"It's a step in the right direction," he said Monday. "It's only half of what needs to be accomplished to figure out if any of the hazardous materials have leached onto residents' properties."

Dassatti wrote that when DEC Commissioner Peter Grannis visited the area in July he said he would have staff look into residents' requests for sump pump sampling. Dassatti said that although the DEC has not found "a clear scientific basis" requiring sump water sampling, the state will do so "in an effort to better address local resident(s') concerns."

The samples will be taken only from homeowners along Hackett Drive and Wadsworth Court who are willing to participate in the investigation. Letters soliciting interest in the test will be sent out soon. Because of the extensive nature of such work, the DEC will not be able to test the sumps of every home bordering the landfill, Dassatti said.

The DEC also said that its research has not indicated that contaminants — radioactive waste from uranium ore processing during the Manhattan Project — from the landfill are migrating through the groundwater northward toward homes in the Riverview Heights area.

Davis disputes that claim since water flows from the highest to lowest point.

"It's a false statement until they complete the necessary testing to come to that assumption, and this would be one of those tests," he said.

City officials plan to meet with new town Supervisor Anthony Caruana, as well as representatives from the DEC, to look into bumping up the timeline for soil testing, Davis said. DEC staff said during a meeting in the fall with Davis that the state planned to conduct soil tests in 18 months.

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