

Residents fear health problems from radioactive waste in landfill

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TOWN OF TONAWANDA, N.Y. (WIVB) – Radioactive wastes buried in an old landfill in the Town of Tonawanda has a lot of people talking. Current and former residents of the area contacted News 4 Investigates on Wednesday saying they had worries about their health.

Federal agencies first detected World War II era radioactive waste in the landfill in 1990. The wastes are buried in the soil on about five acres of land at the old Town of Tonawanda landfill off the Youngmann Memorial Highway, I-290.

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Scientists from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers say no one is in danger unless erosion exposes the waste but some residents disagree.

Current and former residents said they fear that the radioactive waste is linked to a variety of health issues including: respiratory infections, asthma, skin discoloration, miscarriages, and cancer.

“You just cannot believe from 40 years ago how concentrated the groups of houses are. Like nowadays somebody would say, what’s going on there,” asked Jack Gallagher, a former resident.

Gallagher who grew up in the neighborhood in the 50s and 60s said he lost his mom to cancer in the 1970s.

“You know you’re a kid you don’t really understand what’s going on until it happens at your house; then my mom, then the guy across the street, the lady – it seemed to follow a pattern of women who had had one kid and were in their child-bearing years,” Gallagher added.

News 4 Investigates will continue reporting on this landfill with questions to Erie County and New York State Health Departments on any known health issues or or studies.

The landfill contains waste that dates to the World War II Manhattan Project that produced the atomic bomb. The U.S. Army’s Manhattan Engineer District contracted with Linde Air, located about a mile south of the landfill to refine uranium.