

June 15, 1988

Dear Tonawanda Operations Employee:

A public hearing was held at the Franklin Middle School in Tonawanda on April 26th. The meeting was scheduled by the U.S. Department of Energy as part of a process to develop an environmental review and propose response actions for residual radioactive materials at four sites in New York State. Three of those sites are in the Town of Tonawanda (Linde's Tonawanda Operations and Ashland 1 and 2).

This subject has generated considerable emotional response. Some of the reactions are prompted by a lack of information and/or misinformation. The purpose of this letter is to help clarify the situation as it pertains to our property.

There are four existing buildings -- 14, 30, 31, 38 -- on the property which were utilized during the Manhattan Project. Of the four, only Buildings 30 and 38 contain any detectable residual nuclear contaminants, as concluded by extensive studies made in 1976 and 1981. These studies concluded there is no risk to the health of the people occupying the buildings, the site, or the neighborhood. They are fully licensed for their present usage, but there are requirements to be followed when repairing the structures.

Following the 1981 study, we established a five-part action plan. An update follows:

1. Work with the DOE to have five wells that were used for waste effluent disposal examined for radioactivity.

There were two test wells drilled immediately adjacent to the original well locations which yielded soil and water samples to a depth of 150 feet. The testing of samples indicated no radiation levels above normal background. The test wells are being maintained to allow future removal of samples if further testing is desired.

2. Examine test borings done on the property and share the data with the DOE.

Test boring samples taken in 1976-78 for the expansion project were evaluated and showed no radiation above background levels. The test results and some materials were supplied to the DOE.

3. Perform an epidemiology study based on health records.

Employee health records available to the UCC Medical Department and in the possession of the DOE were reviewed. Then, two epidemiology studies were done in order to secure the most meaningful conclusions from the available data. Both studies were to determine the cause of death for former employees. One study was confined to the 1800 employees who were actively engaged on the Manhattan Project work. The other covered over 14,000 other employees who worked at Tonawanda for at least one month during the period from 1946 through 1981.

Both studies have received rigorous external professional reviews. They have been published in major scientific journals and are now part of the literature available to other epidemiology researchers on radiation hazards.

As reported to you in a notice dated November 11, 1987, both studies indicate that there is no evidence of radiation-induced cancers within the employee populations studies. This is totally consistent with the DOE and the New York State Department of Labor position that past and current usage of the Linde Tonawanda facility did not and does not pose a health risk to the employees and neighbors.

4. Assure that all employees associated with the Manhattan Project are informed that they were working with radioactive materials.

Extensive efforts were made to compile a list of Manhattan Project employees' mailing addresses. They were informed by letter of the possibility of having worked with radioactive materials and they were told where they could secure additional data on the then pending epidemiology study.

5. Continue to work with State and Federal officials to determine what action is necessary regarding the ultimate disposition of the residual radioactivity from the former ceramics plant buildings and associated soils.

There have been numerous conversations, correspondence, telephone calls, and visits among Tonawanda and Linde management and the appropriate officials of the Federal, State, County and Town governments, as well as members of the media.

We have cooperated with the DOE and their contractors in doing two previous physical studies of Tonawanda. We are being requested to cooperate again in 1988 so that the DOE can do a more definitive study in preparation for development of a remedial action plan for this site. We anticipate that the physical testing crew will be on site during the Fall of 1988. We intend to make available to the DOE and their contractors as much of our resources as they require to successfully achieve their objectives.

Hopefully, this study will lead to the U.S. DOE's remediation of the Linde Tonawanda site through removal of all contaminated soils and buildings to a permanent low level nuclear waste repository.

Sincerely,

  
Gerald D. Albertson

GDA/cah