

EPA, state DEC officials meet with Town of Niagara residents to address radioactivity

By Editor-in-Chief
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Officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and two state agencies visited with Town of Niagara residents Monday in an attempt to further explain a government-monitored radiological assessments survey now underway on certain residential properties. The session followed a July 10 gathering in a town park where two residents revealed news of radioactivity readings found from recent testing on their individual properties.

In response to the concerns, officials from federal and state agencies held an information session at the Niagara Falls Convention Center, where details on new radiological monitoring in the Town of Niagara were presented. Representatives included NYS DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton, U.S. EPA Region 2 Administrator Mike Martucci, state Department of Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald, state DEC Acting Region 9 Director Chad Staniszewski, EPA Superfund and Emergency Management Division Director Pat Evangelista, and Laura Smith, EPA scientific officer on radiation monitoring and emissions.

Monday's session was an attempt by government officials to further explain the new monitoring details and tell residents that corrective measures would be taken to address any radiological concerns.

That said, the meeting was often an exercise in frustration and futility, as angry Town of Niagara residents shared their concerns regarding radioactive contamination, and chastised state and federal agencies that attempted to delve into the topic, explain remediation measures, and encourage residents to pursue assistance.

"We hear you," Martucci said. "We understand the urgency of the work. The three agencies (DEC, EPA and DOH) are working shoulder to shoulder using the best science that we have available to pinpoint where material may exist and what is needed to address it."

Radiological assessments

He went on to present an overview of government studies and mitigation performed thus far.



From left: Town of Niagara resident Lexi Hawk (standing in rear) joins other residents in challenging comments from DEC and EPA officials. • NYS DEC Acting Region 9 Director Chad Staniszewski. • U.S. EPA Region 2 Administrator Mike Martucci.

The "Niagara and Erie County Radiological Assessment" survey's initial focus involved 1970s-era radiological studies of Niagara County, including the Town of Niagara, by the U.S. Department of Energy. Ground surveys followed in 1984; and recent studies began in the early 2020s by the DEC and EPA to determine radioactive contamination at locations not previously known, with an eye toward future mitigation measures.

Phase 1, involving flyover surveys of town properties from planes 500 feet off the ground, began in 2023, followed by phase 2, which involved additional vehicle-based studies.

In summer 2025, the agencies began phase 3, a ground-based survey of "approximately 380 areas" (public and privately owned) that were identified from earlier flyovers and vehicle-based studies. Attendees learned this included "a broad aerial survey covering a thousand miles of roadway studies to the on-ground assessments. ... We are examining specific areas in a very systematic fashion to either eliminate them from consideration or to address them, based on what we find," Martucci said.

He noted the EPA surveys used specialized equipment and found that "approximately 220 ar-

eas of interest" were determined to be clean with no need additional testing. The studies also found that "approximately 160 ground surveys are ongoing and need to be completed."

It was upon this discovery that the aforementioned "waiver request" letters went out to the roughly 120 individual property owners in the town, advising them of potential radiological issues and asking their consent to access the properties for more study and potential future remediation. The waiver requests ignited new fears and charges of unwarranted infringement from several town residents in attendance, many having experienced the Love Canal crisis of the 1970s.

"This screening activity was begun in the first place with the intention of finding risk where it may exist, addressing it, cleaning it up. I understand and have heard that people are frightened tonight," Martucci said.

McDonald from the DOH, likewise, attempted to dispel residents' concerns at the session. Residents offered harsh complaints toward state Gov. Kathy Hochul, who was at separate events in the Buffalo area on Monday, but absent from the Falls session.

"It's a priority for me, and it's a priority for the New York State

Department of Health," McDonald said. "We're also here to support you as families, and really the homeowners (who) have been affected by this. Our hearts go out to you. You know, it's the direction of the governor. ... We've collected and worked with the information that's available, and we helped make the decision. ... We're committed to providing you clear and complete information and health-related guidance throughout the process. (That's what) this entire project is really about."

Despite attempts by officials to assure residents, tensions among the crowd continued to escalate and at times broke into complete chaos. The session was halted momentarily at times with outright yelling, as government officials pleaded with visitors for calm. At one point, New York State Parks Police were forced to escort a few residents from the room as emotions got out of hand.

Property screening

Evangelista, division director of Super Fund and Emergency Man-

agement for EPA, also sought to calm visitors. His discussion included details on property screening; the in-depth sampling procedures; an update on the waiver request and voluntary relocation procedures of residents if remediation is needed; plus, time duration and other concerns they may encounter.

"There are folks in the room that don't have the same level of information as the others," he said. "I'm just trying to explain the process that would lead to recommendations on how to clean up the property, and I think all of you should be interested."

His comments were met with continued bursts of yelling, swearing and heated exchanges from visitors.

Discussing EPA's risk assessment procedures for any contaminants, he continued, "That lab will conduct an analysis of those samples. The analysis will then be processed at a risk assessment team at EPA in close consultation with DOH and DEC. That will lead to a report for the resident

SEE TON, continued on Page 9

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

POWER AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

The Power Authority of the State of New York (Authority) will hold a public hearing, as detailed below, on the proposed form of Contracts for the sale of Expansion Power Allocations.

Copies of the proposed Contract forms may be inspected at the Authority's Buffalo office at the address below, or online at the Authority's Web site, www.nypa.gov, in the Documents Library under Notices and Agendas.

Those wishing to make oral statements at the hearing are asked to provide to the Authority, in writing and in advance of the hearing, their name(s) and the name of the organization or group they represent. Oral statements should be limited to five minutes. Speakers should also provide two copies of their oral statements.

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026
Hearing Times: 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Hearing Location: New York Power Authority Buffalo office
40 La Riviere Drive, Suite 202, multi-purpose room 210
Buffalo, New York 14202

Written statements provided to the Authority by close of business on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, will also become part of the record of the hearing. For further information, including the address of other Authority offices at which copies of the proposed Contract forms may be inspected, contact:

POWER AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
Felisa Hochheiser, Deputy Corporate Secretary
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(914) 681-6903 | secretaryoffice@nypa.gov

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