

News Release



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NAS Biosolids Report Finds No Scientific Evidence of Health Risk

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released today its report, *Biosolids Applied to Land: Advancing Standards and Practices* (the *NAS Report*), making the overarching finding that “[t]here is no documented scientific evidence that the Part 503 rule has failed to protect health.” At the same time, the *NAS Report* also finds that additional scientific work is needed to further reduce any lingering uncertainty regarding the land-application of biosolids, a position that the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies (AMSA) endorses and is working toward with other stakeholder groups.

To assist the understanding of the biosolids process, AMSA and the Water Environment Federation (WEF) have issued a *Guide to Understanding Biosolids* (the *Guide*), which provides background information regarding the scientific developments in, benefits of, and studies underway, to further improve biosolids management. As the *Guide* states, “Studies by EPA, the Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF) and . . . AMSA have demonstrated that the beneficial land application of biosolids poses a negligible risk to human health and is becoming consistently and increasingly safer.” To download a copy of the AMSA/WEF *Guide*, visit <http://www.amsa-cleanwater.org/private/legreg/outreach/070202gubiov70102.pdf>.

AMSA’s Executive Director, Ken Kirk, expressed that “the current *NAS Report* is one more addition to a long line of studies on this issue and represents the general agreement that scientific research must continue to march on. The *Report*, as it should, leaves the details to EPA, which recognizes the agricultural and environmental benefits of reusing this abundant, environmentally safe resource.”

AMSA further agrees with the *Report*’s conclusion that “[a]lthough there is no documented scientific evidence that the Part 503 rule has failed to protect public health, there is a need to address scientific and management questions and uncertainties that challenge EPA’s biosolids standards.” AMSA has taken the lead in addressing such uncertainties through the Association’s *2000/2001 Survey of Dioxin-Like Compounds in Biosolids: Statistical Analyses*. The survey results demonstrated that levels of dioxin and dioxin-like compounds in biosolids are on average well below EPA’s proposed 1999 limit and have declined significantly over the past several years.

The AMSA/WEF *Guide* identifies additional research underway relating to pathogenic issues, odor and treatment technologies. For example, a recently completed WERF study found that the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of biosolids compare favorably with other soil amendments such as manure and commercial fertilizers. AMSA will continue to work closely with other stakeholders and EPA to ensure further safety enhancements in the treatment and application of biosolids.

AMSA is a national trade association representing over 270 of the nation=s publicly owned wastewater treatment utilities. AMSA members are environmental practitioners dedicated to protecting and improving the nation=s waters and public health. AMSA members collectively treat and reclaim over 18 billion gallons of wastewater every day.