Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

News Release

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Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies

New NIOSH Approaches to Safe Nanotechnology & Strategic Plan for Nanotechnology Research

A "Nano" Step Forward Says Wilson Center's Dr. Andrew Maynard

WASHINGTON – The release of *Approaches to Safe Nanotechnology: An Information Exchange with NIOSH* and *Strategic Plan for NIOSH Nanotechnology Research: Filling the Knowledge Gaps* is a small but important step forward by the U.S. government to address the possible health implications of nanotechnology.

Together, these publications from the Centers for Disease Control's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) represent the most comprehensive assessment to date to come out of the federal government about nanotechnology's possible occupational health impacts.

But this is just one "nano" step in a long journey. NIOSH's current research budget for nanotechnology is approximately one third of one percent of the total U.S. government annual investment of $1 billion in nanotechnology research and development. According to both corporate and environmental groups alike, the federal government is spending only a small fraction of what's needed to study nanotechnology's environmental, safety and health implications.

A key question is whether the resources exist to act on NIOSH's proposed strategy. With the National Science Foundation predicting that by 2015 nanotechnology will have a $1 trillion impact on the global economy and will employ 2 million workers—1 million of which may be in the United States—it is critical to develop the research data necessary to maintain safe American workplaces. NIOSH's current nanotechnology budget is not sufficient to support and sustain the necessary research. If progress is to be made, there needs to be significant additional funding and better research coordination within the U.S. government—as well as internationally.

With nanotechnology being heralded by some as the next industrial revolution, nanotechnologies promise great societal and economic benefits. However, the scale and uniqueness of these technologies—a human hair is roughly 100,000 nanometers (nm) wide, and nanomaterials are generally engineered at a scale of 1 to 100 nm—may lead to new health, safety and environmental risks. Understanding and addressing these risks, especially in the workplace, will be integral to the long-term success of nanotechnologies.

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Andrew Maynard is chief science advisor for The Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The Project was created in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts. Maynard is an internationally recognized leader in the research fields of aerosol characterization and the implications of nanotechnology to occupational health. Prior to joining the Project, he was instrumental in establishing NIOSH's nanotechnology research program.

For *Approaches to Safe Nanotechnology: An Information Exchange with NIOSH* and *Strategic Plan for NIOSH Nanotechnology Research: Filling the Knowledge Gaps* see:
http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/nanotech

For more information about the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies or The Woodrow Wilson Center, see:
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/foresight
or
http://www.wilsoncenter.org

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