



News Release

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Local Officials Move Toward Monitoring Nanotechnologies *Massachusetts city health officials urge adoption of unique voluntary program*

Washington, DC — State and local officials have taken steps to begin monitoring the manufacture and storage of nanomaterials, a major step for a cutting-edge technology that has yet to be regulated by the federal government.

On July 28, the Cambridge (Mass.) Public Health Department recommended to the city manager that Cambridge take several steps to gain a better understanding of the nature and extent of nanotechnology-related activities now underway within the city. In addition, news outlets are reporting that a key member of California State Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials is holding meetings around the state in advance of introducing legislation next year that may grant state regulators landmark oversight of nanomaterials.

In 2006, Berkeley, Calif., passed the first local ordinance in the nation by requiring handlers of nanomaterials to submit toxicology reports on the materials to the city government.

The efforts by state and local officials come as the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies (PEN) recently released a report that discusses possible options for state and local governments to follow for oversight of potential negative impacts of nanotechnology – including local air, waste and water regulations, as well as labeling and worker safety requirements.

“In the absence of action at the federal level, local and state governments may begin to explore their options for oversight of nanotechnologies,” says Suellen Keiner, the author of *Room at the Bottom? Potential State and Local Strategies for Managing the Risks and Benefits of Nanotechnology*.

Another recent PEN report, *Application of the Toxics Release Inventory To Nanomaterials*, addresses the potential application of local “right-to-know” laws concerning nanotechnologies.

The Cambridge Public Health Department, in collaboration with the Cambridge Nanomaterials Advisory Committee, in its new report does not recommend the city manager

enact a new ordinance regulating nanotechnology, but it does recommend that the city take the following steps:

- Establish an inventory of engineered nanoscale materials that are manufactured, handled, processed, or stored in the city, in cooperation with the Cambridge Fire Department and the Local Emergency Planning Committee.
- Offer technical assistance, in collaboration with academic and nanotech sector partners, to help firms and institutions evaluate their existing health and safety plans for limiting risk to workers involved in nanomaterials research and manufacturing.
- Offer up-to-date health information to residents on products containing nanomaterials and sponsor public outreach events.
- Track rapidly changing developments in research concerning possible health risks from various engineered nanoscale materials.
- Track the evolving status of regulations and best practices concerning engineered nanoscale materials among state and federal agencies, and international health and industry groups.
- Report to the city council every two years on the changing regulatory and safety landscape of the nanotechnology sector.

David Rejeski, the director of PEN and a member of an advisory committee that oversaw the public health department's document, says that while the recommendations are encouraging and important, there is still a need for federal oversight of nanotechnology and an increase in research concerning the risks posed by nanomaterials.

“Today, there are more than 600 manufacturer-identified consumer products available on the market that contain nanomaterials and countless other commercial and industrial applications the public and policymakers are not aware of,” Rejeski says. Unfortunately, federal agencies currently have to draw on decades-old laws to ensure the safe development and use of these technologically advanced products -- many of which are woefully out of date. Federal officials need 21st century tools for cutting-edge technologies. Anything short of that is unacceptable.”

Meanwhile, California Assemblyman Mike Feuer (D), a member of the Assembly's Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials, is holding meetings at major state universities and research centers with representatives from industry, government, environmental groups and others in an effort to craft legislation for introduction in 2009 that would establish a state nanotechnology regulatory program, according to an April article in *Inside Cal/EPA*.

The Cambridge recommendations are available here:

http://www.cambridgepublichealth.org/policy-practice/nano_policy.php

Room at the Bottom? Potential State and Local Strategies for Managing the Risks and Benefits of Nanotechnology is available here:

http://www.nanotechproject.org/publications/archive/room_at_bottom/

Application of the Toxics Release Inventory To Nanomaterials is available here:

<http://www.nanotechproject.org/publications/archive/toxics/>

About Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology is the ability to measure, see, manipulate and manufacture things usually between 1 and 100 nanometers. A nanometer is one billionth of a meter; a human hair is roughly 100,000 nanometers wide. In 2007, the global market for nanotechnology-based products totaled \$147 billion. Lux Research projects that figure will grow to \$3.1 trillion by 2015.

The **Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies** (www.nanotechproject.org) is an initiative launched by the **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** and **The Pew Charitable Trusts** in 2005. It is dedicated to helping business, government and the public anticipate and manage possible health and environmental implications of nanotechnology.

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