

World's first mandatory national nanotech rule pending

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The Canadian government reportedly is planning to release in February the world's first national regulation requiring companies to detail their use of engineered nanomaterials, according to environmental officials. The information gathered under the requirement will be used to evaluate the risks of engineered nanomaterials and will help to develop appropriate safety measures to protect human health and the environment.

Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies (PEN) experts have been urging increased oversight of nanotechnologies in recent years, and note the move by the Canadian government is a significant step for consumer and environmental protection.

"Nanotechnology is developing rapidly. People and the environment are being increasingly exposed to new nanomaterials. Yet governments lack information on the type, quantity and possible risks of nanoscale materials being manufactured and used in products today. This is information that is vital to ensuring the safe use of nanotechnology," according to Andrew Maynard, chief science advisor for PEN. "This decision by Canada—to establish the world's first national mandatory nanoscale materials reporting program for companies—is an important step toward ensuring that nanotechnology regulation is driven by accurate information and high-quality science."

Canada's action comes shortly after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an interim report on its Nanoscale Materials

Stewardship Program, a voluntary information submission program that has received limited industry participation. The EPA report notes the lack of data the program garnered and says the agency will consider how best to use the federal Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) to gather more risk data. Previous studies by PEN experts have concluded that TSCA is "extremely deficient," and that EPA has not effectively used the tools it has under that law to address nanotechnology, keeping the agency from identifying which substances are nanomaterials and whether they pose a hazard.

Source: Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies

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