

Survey reveals regulatory agencies viewed as unprepared for nanotechnology

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Three stakeholder groups agree that regulators are not adequately prepared to manage the risks posed by nanotechnology, according to a paper published in the peer-reviewed journal *PLOS One*. In a survey of nano-scientists and engineers, nano-environmental health and safety scientists, and regulators, researchers at the UCSB Center for Nanotechnology in Society (CNS) and at the University of British Columbia found that those who perceive the risks posed by nanotechnology as "novel" are more likely to believe that regulators are unprepared. Representatives of regulatory bodies themselves felt most strongly that this was the case. "The people responsible for regulation are the most skeptical about their ability to regulate," said CNS Director and co-author Barbara Herr Harthorn.

"The message is essentially," said first author Christian Beaudrie of the Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability at the University of British Columbia, "the more that risks are seen as new, the less trust survey respondents have in regulatory mechanisms. That is, regulators don't have the tools to do the job adequately."

The authors also believe that when respondents suggested that more stakeholder groups need to share the responsibility of preparing for the potential consequences of nanotechnologies, this indicated a greater "perceived magnitude or complexity of the risk management challenge." Therefore, they assert, not only do regulators feel unprepared, they need input from "a wide range of experts along the nanomaterial life cycle." These include laboratory scientists, businesses, health and environmental

groups (NGOs), and government agencies.

More information: The title of the paper is, "Expert Views on Regulatory Preparedness for Managing the Risks of Nanotechnologies." It was published on November 11 and can be read here:

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