

Patricia Martin
617 H Street, SW
Quincy, WA 98848

Dear Ms. Martin:

Thank you for your email message of August 4, 1999 to Administrator Browner regarding the issue of industrial wastes in fertilizers. I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Administrator.

Over the past two years the Environmental Protection Agency has conducted several major studies to examine the issue of contaminants in fertilizer products, including fertilizers made from recycled industrial hazardous wastes. These studies are now essentially complete. Earlier this year the Agency released the report entitled "Background Report on Fertilizer Use, Contaminants and Regulations", a copy of which I believe you have received. In addition, we expect to release the Agency's risk assessment of contaminants in fertilizers in the next few weeks. This risk assessment report will be posted on the Agency's website, and we will be happy to inform you when it is available.

Based on these studies and other information that we have reviewed (such as the report issued earlier this year by the Washington Department of Ecology), EPA believes that recycling of industrial hazardous wastes to make fertilizers can be a safe and beneficial practice. As you may know, the great majority of hazardous waste derived fertilizers are zinc micronutrient fertilizers. Many of these waste-derived fertilizers are high-quality products with very low levels of contaminants such as heavy metals. It is clear that the levels of contaminants in zinc and other types of fertilizers depend primarily on how the feedstock materials are processed in fertilizer manufacture, rather than the origin of the feedstocks.

I believe that you are also aware that EPA's Office of Solid Waste is in the process of revising the current regulations that apply to hazardous waste derived fertilizers. While we believe that the current regulations are generally protective of

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human health and the environment, we are interested in improving these regulations to ensure that the requirements are more consistent and are tailored specifically for fertilizers. We expect to publish a proposed rulemaking for fertilizers next year, and hope that you will continue to participate in this important regulatory process.

While we do not believe that there is an environmental or public health issue significant enough to warrant broader EPA regulation or additional risk assessment of fertilizer products at this time, we appreciate your continued concern with this issue. It is entirely possible that some companies (or even some individuals) may be violating the regulations, either deliberately or otherwise. The Agency has taken enforcement actions against such violations in the past, and will continue to take actions to identify and prosecute such environmental offenses in the future. If you have any information that may be helpful to us in this regard, we would be more than interested to hear about it.

Again, thank you for your interest in this issue. If you have any questions regarding EPA's fertilizer-related initiatives, please contact Mr. Dave Fagan of my staff, at (703) 308-0603, or Dr. Dave Bartus in EPA's Region 10 office, at (206) 553-2804.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Cotsworth, Acting Director
Office of Solid Waste