

Mr. David V. Sherrod
466 E Ave.
Chicago, IL 95926

Dear Mr. Sherrod:

Thank you for your recent letter to President Bush, in which you expressed concerns regarding toxic materials in fertilizers. I am pleased to respond on behalf of the President.

In response to recent public concerns regarding the use of hazardous waste to make agricultural fertilizers, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has taken a careful look at how hazardous waste is used by the fertilizer industry, the types of contaminants that may occur in fertilizer products, and the potential risks from exposure to contaminants found in a wide variety of fertilizers. At the same time, the Agency has been working to update and strengthen its existing regulations that apply to the use of zinc-bearing recycling hazardous waste to make fertilizers.

EPA's studies have concluded that fertilizers are generally safe. The Agency has not found evidence of widespread, illegal "sham" recycling of hazardous waste in the fertilizer industry. EPA has found that, by volume, fertilizers made from recycled hazardous waste account for less than one-half of one percent of the total fertilizer market in this country. Nearly all fertilizers made from hazardous waste ingredients are zinc micronutrient fertilizers, which farmers usually blend in small amounts with other fertilizers to grow crops such as corn, rice, potatoes, and fruit trees.

When done properly, recycling of zinc-bearing hazardous waste to make fertilizers is both safe and environmentally beneficial--conserving resources and preventing pollution. Modern technologies process and filter out contaminants from zinc-bearing waste materials, producing clean, high-quality zinc fertilizers. Wastes such as pollution control dusts from brass foundries and brass fabricators are most often used for this purpose. Demand for lower quality fertilizers made from steelmaking dusts, known by waste code K061, has been steadily declining.

EPA's new regulations for zinc fertilizers made from recycled hazardous waste were published on July 24, 2002. Enclosed is a copy of this final rule. EPA believes the new regulations strike a good balance between strengthening environmental protections, increasing

industry accountability, and providing incentives for safe, legitimate recycling. We also hope that the new rules, and the record of evidence that supports them, will help to allay unnecessary public fears with regard to fertilizers made from recycled hazardous wastes.

Again, we appreciate your interest in this matter, and thank you for expressing your concerns to the President. Should you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Mr. David Fagan of my staff, at (703) 308-0603, or by email at fagan.david@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Cotsworth, Director
Office of Solid Waste

Enclosure

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