

**The following was published in Inside EPA, October 2008:**

***Massachusetts Group Looks To Develop First-Time  
Nanotech 'Best Practices'***

The Massachusetts Interagency Nanotechnology Committee -- believed to be the first state group focused on the safe use of nanotechnology -- is compiling a set of best management practices for laboratories and companies working with nanomaterials to protect workers, the environment and public health from the possible risks of the emerging technology.

Massachusetts has more than 100 companies and 11 research centers working with nanotechnology, according to a source involved with the committee. The group hopes to “work collaboratively” with these companies and researchers in an attempt to characterize the work with nanomaterials going on in the state and discuss how best to protect workers, public health and the environment, the source says. So far the group has launched a Web site clearinghouse to post information about nanotechnology in Massachusetts and held a workshop on nanotechnology last November.

The state’s move is significant because activists have questioned whether the federal National Nanotechnology Initiative, an interagency group that represents the government’s investment in nanotechnology research, is dedicating enough resources to the study of the environmental, health and safety risks of the emerging technology.

The Massachusetts group is currently developing a set of best management practices, now going through internal review. They will be sent to stakeholders before an upcoming conference, slated to be held in the next “several months.” The source says the committee hopes to get feedback on how to improve the best practices, which will largely be compiled from existing management practices developed by groups like the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. These will be “put into a format for companies and researchers to use,” the source says, adding the committee is “looking for what will be most helpful.”

The best practices will address questions about laboratory and workplace safety. As an example, “If you are working with the [materials] as a powder, what kind of respirator and gloves should you use?” the source says.

The group hopes to develop “a product groups can use and that will make a difference,” the source says. At the upcoming conference, the group is planning on having two breakout sessions to look at the lifecycles of two

products that use nanomaterials in an attempt to identify where the practices would be adequate and where there are gaps.

At its upcoming event, the committee is also looking to start a discussion of how to measure nanomaterials, focusing on issues like accuracy, reliability and instrumentation costs. “How can you measure [nanomaterials] in the workplace or in the environment if there is a release?” the source says. From studying surface area and particle size, the source says that the committee hopes to use the information to start advancing risk assessments “which we will ultimately need.”

The group is also hoping to work with people in the state to promote risk characterization of nanomaterials, as well as increasing the risk information available to the public.

The committee was born out of an April 2007 seminar on nanotechnology hosted by the emerging contaminants workgroup at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The committee also includes representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Department of Occupational Safety, the Office of Technology Assistance and the Massachusetts Office of Business Development.

*Inside EPA*, October 2008. Inside Washington Publishers, 1919 South Eads St., Suite 201, Arlington, VA 22202