

WEB-29

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Interim Best Management Practices for Emerging Contaminants in Certified Biosolids

What are biosolids?

“Biosolids” are defined by RSA 485-A:2, XXII as “any sludge derived from a sewage wastewater treatment plant that meets the standards for beneficial reuse specified by the Department [of Environmental Services].” In other words, biosolids are made by taking sludge produced from a sanitary source, such as a wastewater treatment facility (WWTF), and treating it in order to use it for beneficial use. In order to produce biosolids, a facility must obtain a certificate from the Sludge Quality Certification (SQC) Program through the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). This program sets the standards that sludge is required to meet before it can be made into biosolids and used for beneficial use. More information about this program can be obtained from the [Sludge Quality Certification Fact Sheet](#).

What are emerging contaminants?

The EPA defines emerging contaminants “as a term used by water quality professionals to describe pollutants that have been detected in water bodies that may cause ecological or human health impacts, and typically are not regulated under current environmental laws. Sources of these pollutants include agriculture, urban runoff and ordinary household products (such as soaps and disinfectants) and pharmaceuticals that are disposed to sewage treatment plants and subsequently discharged to surface waters.” Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are considered emerging contaminants. NHDES monitors emerging contaminants and works to establish screening standards within the SQC Program to protect human health and the environment.

Interim Best Management Practices

For industrial and commercial establishments:

- Educate the rate payers of your facility about emerging contaminants such as PFAS compounds. Inform them that your community produces biosolids and educate them on how they can help maintain high quality biosolids.
- Encourage them to avoid products that contain emerging contaminants. Suggest that they begin asking and investigating if those compounds are in the products they use. If so, they should seek to use other alternatives.

- Inform these partners that the NHDES Pollution Prevention Program (NHPPP) provides free, non-regulatory, confidential assistance with any pollution prevention questions. They can also provide information on new technologies, pollution prevention products and vendors, and fact sheets. Please contact them at [\(603\) 271-6460](tel:6032716460) for assistance.

For your facility:

- Screen and test your collection system and incoming side streams to determine if any sections contribute higher levels of emerging contaminants and trace the contaminants back to the source.
- Ensure your pretreatment program is prepared, involved and ready to investigate for emerging contaminants.
- Maintain a budget in order to screen for emerging contaminants.
- Screen septage and/or landfill leachate to evaluate if these sources will negatively impact the quality of your biosolids.
- Create an education program for residents on the benefits of biosolids and explain what they can do to help create reduce emerging contaminant loading onto the WWTF. Encourage them not to use or buy products that contain emerging contaminants.
- Document your efforts and include them in your SQC annual report.

For more information

Dealing with emerging contaminants is a challenge and NHDES encourages communities that produce biosolids to stay involved and informed on these issues. While NHDES will provide timely communication on important issues, you can still reach out to us at any time. If you have questions, comments or concerns, please contact the NHDES Residuals Management Section at [\(603\) 271-3571](tel:6032713571) or SludgeandSeptage@des.nh.gov. We are also available to provide technical assistance or to discuss any of the information provided in this fact sheet.