

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-1903

Dear Senator Snowe:

Thank you for your October 9, 2002 letter to Mr. Ed Krenik of our Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs. Your letter was forwarded to my office for response. You wrote on behalf of your constituent, Ms. Carole Crommett who had expressed concern about the regulation of sodium azide and the safety hazards posed by the improper disposal of sodium azide. You indicated your appreciation for any information that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) could provide about the regulation and disposal requirements for sodium azide.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) hazardous waste regulations, under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), address the safe management of wastes containing sodium azide in the following circumstances: (1) disposal of commercial sodium azide; (2) disposal of wastes from the manufacture of explosives; and (3) disposal of any waste that, when mixed with water, generates toxic gases in a quantity sufficient to present a danger to human health or the environment. A business or facility that generates waste is required to determine if one of the above circumstances applies to their waste in order to determine if the hazardous waste regulations apply when they dispose of sodium azide.

The State of Maine, whose hazardous waste program is authorized to operate in lieu of the federal hazardous waste regulations, may have more stringent or more specific waste management regulations that address your constituent's concerns. Your staff or your constituent may wish to contact Mr. Scott Whittier of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, whose address and phone number are below:

Scott Whittier, Director
Oil and Hazardous Waste Facilities Regulation Division
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Statehouse, Station #17
Augusta, ME 04333-0017

Phone: (207) 287-2651

In addition, the U.S. Occupational and Health Administration (OSHA) has regulations

governing safety procedures for managing various classes of explosives and has general guidelines for handling chemicals and risk communication. Your staff or your constituent might want to contact either the Federal OSHA or the State OSHA to better understand how handling of sodium azide might be addressed by those regulations. One possible point of contact is the OSHA Directorate of Enforcement Programs in Washington, D.C. at (202) 693-2100.

If Ms. Crommett has more specific questions about EPA's hazardous waste program, she may contact Ms. Betsy Henry of the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 564-7222. She may also contact the Agency's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Hotline for more general information about Agency solid and hazardous waste programs. The toll-free number is (800) 424-9346.

I hope this information is helpful in responding to your constituent and I appreciate your interest in protecting human health and the environment.

Sincerely,

Marianne Lamont Horinko
Assistant Administrator

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