



Sewage Sludge (Biosolids) Information Sheet

Key Terms:

- Biosolids (also referred to as Sludge or Sewage Sludge) are organic solids that are produced by wastewater treatment processes.
- Class B – Sewage Sludge (biosolids) that is partially treated so that it still contains detectable levels of potentially disease causing organisms (pathogens). The levels are supposed to be low enough that pathogens die within a short period of ground application following United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines.
- Class A – Sewage Sludge treated to have no detectable levels of pathogens present.
- Class A EQ (Exceptional Quality) – Similar to Class A but with the additional treatment and testing to prove it meets a lower metal content standard.

Sewage Sludge (Biosolids) History in Riverside County

Historically, the most common way to deal with accumulations of treated sewage sludge was to apply it to agricultural areas as a soil amendment.

In 1991, County of Riverside Ordinance 696 was enacted that set standards and protocols for the application of Class B sewage sludge to agricultural land in Riverside County. Class A and Class A EQ biosolids were not addressed in this Ordinance. Companies that were land applying the material were required to provide testing information on each load and details about when and where Class B applications would occur.

In 2001, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors assembled a committee of individuals representing affected homeowners, farmers, regulators (Department of Environmental Health, County Agricultural Commissioner, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board), scientific community (UC Riverside), medical (County Health Officer) and water treatment agencies. Upon the committee's recommendation, County of Riverside Ordinance 812 was enacted to prohibit the land application of Class B sewage sludge beginning November 2001.

Between 2001 and 2004 the committee reviewed available literature, had multiple discussions, and determined that no scientifically verified correlation between sewage sludge and illness could be found. The County Health Officer, a physician, created a report assessing the health impact. The discussions focused on "Quality of Life" issues related to odor and nuisance aspects



of land application sewage sludge near residences, businesses and schools. The committee determined an additional ordinance was needed to address these quality of life concerns.

In 2004, County of Riverside Ordinance 830 was passed to regulate the application of Class A sewage sludge beginning November 26th 2004. The Ordinance defines permitting, testing, notification, application and location requirements for Class A sewage sludge. The requirements had a significant impact on land application of sewage sludge.

Present Day

The Riverside County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) is responsible for investigating any allegations involving possible land application of sewage sludge in County areas. Complaints within incorporated areas need to be addressed with the appropriate city.

- Over the years many complaints which had been attributed to sewage sludge were determined to be legal application of cow manure. Application of cow manure is regulated and permitted by the Riverside County Agricultural Department under County of Riverside Ordinance 427.
- Residents are encouraged to contact the Department of Environmental Health if they believe the land application of sewage sludge is occurring within the County unincorporated area. Please call Greg Reyes, Supervising Environmental Health Specialist, (951) 955-8980.
- If you believe you are suffering from negative health effects due to sewage sludge which has been applied in your area in the past, you are encouraged to seek the advice of your medical professional.