



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **METRO WASTEWATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT PASSES 3<sup>RD</sup> PARTY AUDIT** National Biosolids Partnership certifies Metro's Environmental Management System for Biosolids

DENVER, August 8 — The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District (Metro), which provides wastewater treatment services for 1.5 million people in most of metro Denver, has been notified by the National Biosolids Partnership that its Environmental Management System (EMS) for Biosolids program has been certified, effective July 30, 2005. The auditing firm NSF International performed the independent, third-party audit of Metro's EMS in June and recommended certification.

Biosolids are the treated, nutrient-rich solid materials that result from wastewater treatment that meet stringent state and federal regulatory requirements for land application as a soil amendment. The Metro District produces about 75 dry tons of biosolids each day. Biosolids typically contain nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, a host of micronutrients, and organic matter for the soil.

Implementing an EMS is entirely voluntary, and only seven other wastewater treatment agencies in the U.S. have been certified by the National Biosolids Partnership. The National Biosolids Partnership (NBP) is an alliance of the Water Environment Federation and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), with advisory support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

NSF International Strategic Registration, Ltd., an audit firm accredited by the National Biosolids Partnership, conducted the on-site audit from June 21-24. The audit said the Metro District's Environmental Management System (EMS) for Biosolids meets the National Biosolids Partnership criteria for certification.

"The Metro District has put a lot of work into developing and implementing its EMS for Biosolids program, and it's great to get the validation and confirmation of our efforts from the independent auditors. I'm extremely proud of our people," said District Manager Robert Hite.

The auditors found eight areas for which they commended Metro (the most for any agency audited by NSF), six opportunities for improvement, and five minor nonconformances. A nonconformance is a deviation in the established Biosolids Reuse Policy and EMS from the *Code of Good Practice* principles or the requirements of the EMS. Nonconformances include circumstances in which legal, voluntary or EMS-specific requirements are not met, but more importantly, they identify opportunities for the organization to improve its overall biosolids management program.

"We truly believe the EMS program will help us improve how we manage our biosolids, ensure that we meet and exceed all regulatory requirements, and public health and environmental risks are reduced to the lowest possible levels," said Mitch Costanzo, Metro's director of Resource Recovery and Reuse.

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The EMS for Biosolids documents the Metro District's all-encompassing biosolids management program. It ensures that biosolids are processed appropriately and safely, proper documentation and reporting requirements for the reuse of the product are met, and the Metro District's overall management of the program is efficient and environmentally sound.

To earn the National Biosolids Partnership's EMS certification, an agency must:

1. Document its responsibilities in industrial waste pretreatment (Metro has won several US EPA awards for how it controls industrial wastes), wastewater treatment (the Metro District recently won a national award for 10 years without a permit violation), and final use of biosolids (Metro last year won the US EPA's national award for biosolids management)
2. Commit itself to living up to the 10 principles of good biosolids management as spelled out in the National Biosolids Partnership's *Code of Good Practice*
3. Operate an EMS that meets all the National Biosolids Partnership's requirements
4. Commit itself to continued improvement in operating its EMS for Biosolids, regulatory compliance, public participation, and quality biosolids management practices
5. Complete a fully independent, third-party audit and be certified by the National Biosolids Partnership's accredited audit firm (in this case, NSF International Strategic Registration, Ltd.)

Typically, an EMS supports continual improvement of environmental performance activities by helping an organization identify and act on opportunities for improvements in:

- Product and service quality
- Regulatory compliance
- Risk management and preparedness
- Credibility with stakeholders
- Record-keeping, documentation and information management

The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District treats about 140 million gallons of wastewater a day and is the largest wastewater treatment authority in the Rocky Mountain West. The Metro District provides wastewater treatment services for about 1.5 million people, including the residents of Denver, Arvada, Aurora, Lakewood, Thornton, part of Westminster, and more than 40 metro area sanitation and water and sanitation districts. The service area covers 380 square miles.

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