

Since POTWs have not been designed to treat to the wide variety of pollutants present in the industrial effluents feeding into them, the sludge rule will require more thorough pretreatment in order to eliminate toxic pollutants and other harmful pollutants originating in industry.

According to the EPA, about 30% of the sludges at POTWs do not meet the requirements of the new rule. The remaining 70% are considered to be of very good quality and can be used like any other fertilizer or soil conditioner. However only a third of these useable sludges are in fact being used. The rule also imposes odour controls, and this calls for various techniques that can also eliminate pathogenic micro-organisms.

1.2.5 STORMWATERS

Stormwaters from industrial and municipal sites are subject to NPDES licensing now that the EPA has acted on a recent court judgment rejecting further delays. Technologies specifically for controlling stormwaters are needed, as well as methods for assessing and for limiting their impact on water quality.

Administrative procedures in this area have yet to be specified. Discussions involving companies, the states and the EPA are under way.

1.2.6. NEW NATIONAL REGULATION ON TOXIC POLLUTANTS -- WATER QUALITY CRITERIA (National Toxic Rule)

This regulation, issued in December 1992, sets national water quality standards for toxic pollutants applicable to all states except those which have adopted more restrictive criteria. The criteria are based on the degree of risk to human health. However there is no consensus on the proposed risk level or on the exposure assumptions used by the EPA; these could therefore be challenged.

The criteria will nevertheless have the effect of imposing very severe concentration limits on POTWs. Again there will have to be extensive pretreatment by firms discharging wastewater into municipal sewers.

The specific limits applicable to a given company are to be set when the NPDES licence is issued or renewed, either directly by the EPA or by those states which have received delegated authority.