

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0960-8524(17)30416-9

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biortech.2017.03.135>

Reference: BITE 17839

To appear in: *Bioresource Technology*

Received Date: 17 February 2017

Revised Date: 19 March 2017

Accepted Date: 22 March 2017

Please cite this article as: Zhang, Z-Z., Xu, J-J., Shi, Z-J., Cheng, Y-F., Ji, Z-Q., Deng, R., Jin, R-C., Short-term impacts of Cu, CuO, ZnO and Ag nanoparticles (NPs) on anammox sludge: CuNPs make a difference, *Bioresource Technology* (2017), doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biortech.2017.03.135>

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Short-term impacts of Cu, CuO, ZnO and Ag nanoparticles (NPs) on anammox sludge: CuNPs make a difference

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Abstract

The increasing application of engineered nanoparticles (NPs) has posed an emerging challenge to wastewater treatment processes. The short-term impacts of CuNPs, CuONPs, ZnONPs and AgNPs on anaerobic ammonium oxidation (anammox) process were investigated firstly in this study. CuONPs, ZnONPs and AgNPs up to 50 mg g⁻¹ suspended solid (SS) did not affect anammox activity, reactive oxygen species (ROS) production or cell membrane integrity. However, 1.25 mg g⁻¹SS CuNPs significantly inhibited the anammox activity and the loads that caused 50% inhibition were 4.64 ± 1.24 and 3.27 ± 0.79 mg g⁻¹SS for anammox granules and flocs, respectively. 5 mg g⁻¹SS CuNPs caused serious accumulation of the toxic intermediate N₂H₄. Furthermore, CuNPs interacted with extracellular polymeric substances by specifically bonding to tyrosine or tryptophan-containing groups, C-O-C in polysaccharides and -OH in polymeric compounds. Therefore, this study calls for more attention to the risks of NPs to the anammox-based processes.

Keywords: Anammox; Nanoparticles; Toxicity; Sludge; Extracellular polymeric substances

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