

CAQM issues Statutory Directions to control air pollution from Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) burning/ biomass burning and incidences of fire at Sanitary Landfill (SLF) sites and dumpsites

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In a decisive move to tackle one of the major contributors to air pollution i.e. open burning of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) /Open biomass generating Particulate Matter (PM_{10} & $PM_{2.5}$) and other harmful gaseous pollutants (NO_2 , SO_2 , CO, Dioxins, Furans, etc.) in the region, the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) via Direction No. 91 has issued comprehensive directions under Section 12 of the CAQM Act, 2021, aimed at eliminating fire incidents in Sanitary Landfill (SLF) sites, dumpsites, and open burning of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW)/ biomass across the National Capital Region (NCR).

The Commission has directed the concerned agencies in the NCR to take appropriate actions under two broad categories with a view to prevent fire incidents and resultant high levels of air pollution:

I. Management of legacy waste at Sanitary Landfill Sites and Dumpsites – prevention of fire incidents

- a. Proper identification, categorization, demarcation and fire risk assessment of all SLFs and dumpsites located in Delhi-NCR.
- b. Extensive bio-mining / bio-remediation to be carried out in the landfills/ dumpsites to liquidate the legacy waste as per the targeted timelines already submitted to the Hon'ble Supreme Court. GNCTD and NCR State Governments to review the respective time-bound action plans for liquidating such legacy solid waste.
- c. Mandatory installation of CCTV cameras at the SLFs and dumpsites, including appropriate fencing arrangement all along the boundary of the SLFs and dumpsites.
- d. Installation of Methane Gas Detectors at the SLFs and dumpsites so that the areas with high methane concentration are identified and preventive/ corrective measures taken accordingly.
- e. Temperature at windrows to be monitored with a non-contact infrared thermometer and records to be maintained for noting major deviations from the temperature range of $35^{\circ}C$ - $59^{\circ}C$.
- f. Frequent patrolling to guard against entry of unauthorised persons at the SLFs and dumpsites, particularly during the night hours.
- g. Periodic mock drills to be conducted to prevent fire accidents at SLFs and dumpsites, including quarterly audits for Fire Safety and hazardous emissions.
- h. Adequate fire-fighting arrangements to be made at all SLFs and dumpsites, including hydrants, water tankers and earthmovers for soil spreading etc.
- i. Adequate storage of sand/ chemical fire extinguishing means for immediate action, whenever initiation of fire is sensed, besides dedicated fire tenders (preferably with chemical extinguishing media) and other fire safety measures, specifically during the summer season, which is more prone to SLF and dumpsite fires.
- j. Safety gear/ Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to be provided to all workers at the site and training imparted periodically to the workers towards detection and control of fire including training on safe handling of the legacy waste etc.

II. Management of fresh generation of MSW – prevention of fire incidents through open burning of MSW/ Biomass etc.:

- a. Ensure collection, segregation, transportation and processing of MSW in accordance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, notified by the MoEF&CC.
- b. Improved and effective surveillance mechanism at locations vulnerable to garbage burning, particularly during the night hours and in the winter season.
- c. Zero tolerance towards open burning of MSW at vulnerable points, intermediate dumps, collection centres or during transit.
- d. Regular deployment/ patrolling by enforcement teams towards prevention and control of open burning of MSW.
- e. Augmenting the capacities of Urban Local Bodies to process the horticulture waste in parks, gardens, green belts, institutions, roadside etc. throughout the year and intensify collection efforts during autumn season.
- f. Public awareness campaigns and public participation should be ensured through RWAs, Industry Associations, Shopkeepers' Associations, etc. to prevent open waste burning in municipal areas.
- g. Regular capacity-building programs should be incorporated for sanitation staff to enhance their skills and knowledge in the processing and handling of municipal solid waste

All concerned agencies as mentioned under various statutes relating to solid waste management have been directed to ensure compliance with the Statutory Directions of the Commission. The Commission emphasizes that these directions are in addition to the existing directions issued by the Hon'ble Courts, MoEF&CC, CPCB or any other authority.

Further, all State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)/ Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) for the respective NCR areas, have to submit a consolidated State wide report on prevention and control of sanitary landfill site and dumpsite fires and open Municipal Solid Waste/ Bio-mass burning in Delhi-NCR to the Commission in a prescribed format for the Quarterly Report. Non-compliance of the Directions of the Commission shall attract penal action in terms of Clause 14 of the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021.

With this direction, the Commission seeks to bring uniform enforcement, improved risk preparedness, and enhanced accountability across the region.

The Commission calls upon all stakeholders — especially Urban Local Bodies, SPCBs/ DPCC and other concerned agencies in NCR to ensure rigorous and strict implementation of the directions for preventing/ eliminating open burning of miscellaneous solid waste and to control the incidences of fires in the SLFs and MSW dumpsites.

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