EHS Newsletter

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

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EHS alliance

Key Points of Issue

COVID-19 and Working from Home Briefly

During this unprecedented time, many employees are doing WFH on a short-term basis. For specific, this may be a normal part of their work arrangements. However, for many employers and employees, it is a new experience. Employers have explicit responsibilities to ensure the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees and these duties include the employee's workspace where employees are required to work from home.

Employers' Responsibilities

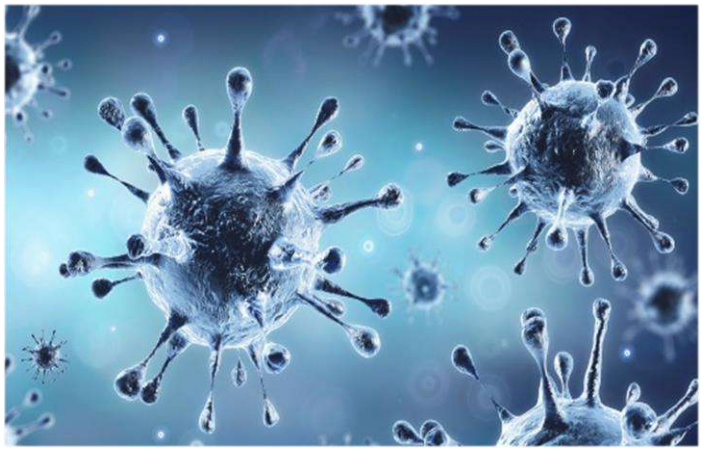
Health and Safety Responsibility for at work rests with the employer whether or not that work is being done at the worker's home. Employers should consult with their employees to ensure they are aware of any specific risks regarding working from home, that the work activity and the temporary workspace are suitable, the employee has suitable equipment to enable the work to be done, and that there is a pre-arranged means of contact.

Employers must determine whether the temporary home workspace is suitable for the work the employee is undertaking. Questions to consider include:

- Does the employee have a suitable space to work from temporarily?
- Are there adequate light and ventilation adequate to work?
- Is there enough space to accommodate the required equipment?
- Is the floor area clear of electrical cables and other slip/trip hazards?
- Are electrical sockets, plugs and cords in good condition?

For employees with disabilities or who require special consideration, e.g. pregnant employees, young employees or those with mobility needs, the employer should consider the suitability of the person to the work in the perspective of their home working space. It is essential that work tasks and working conditions do not adversely affect the health of vulnerable employees or those with a disability.

Equipment already in use in the workplace, e.g. laptop,



mouse, monitor, keyboard and headset, can be used for temporary home-working. If the employer provides any equipment, it must be in good condition and suitable for the work activity. Suitable equipment already available in the employee's home can be considered for temporary work from there.

Supporting Employees

Working from home can result in employees feeling isolated, working longer hours and blurring the lines between work and family life. It is important that employers keep in touch with their employees and employees know they have support at all times during working hours. Employers should ensure that contact details for employees are on file and agree a means of contact. Consider arranging regular updates via phone, web calls or email with each employee and provide employees with emergency contact details. It is also helpful to provide employees with information detailing when it is important for them to contact their employer and where appropriate,

Arrange IT support in the event of technical problems.

Work should be organised in such a way that the employee takes regular breaks. Apart from providing employees with regular feedback on their work, encourage them to maintain contact with their colleagues and to separate their work life from their daily life.

Employees' Responsibilities

Employees also have vital duties and responsibilities when working from home. Employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by the work being undertaken. Employees must cooperate with the employer and follow their instructions and any procedures that have been out in place. Any injury should be reported to the employer immediately.

Employees should consider the most appropriate space within their home for work activity. Key elements include lighting, heat and ventilation to be able to work comfortably, clutter-free floor area to avoid slip and trip hazards, suitable power sockets to avoid trailing cables and overloading, and internet access. Employees should also identify what equipment is required to work temporarily from home and agree these items with the employer.

Separately from the usual regular contact employees should contact their employer if there is an incident arising from a work activity, if the equipment the employer has provided is not working properly or requires maintenance, and if there is a specific query or concerns relating to safety, health and welfare.

For further information visit the website at **www.ehsall.in**

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UN report reported Nitrogen Dioxide levels fell over 70 % during lockdown in Delhi

Source: https://www.fresherslive.com/current-affairs/articles/un-report

The UN policy brief stated that Levels of nitrogen dioxide fell by more than 70% during the lockdown in New Delhi. The environmental gains could be temporary if the cities re-open without policies to prevent air pollution and promote de-carbonization. Highlights: It also stated that nitrogen dioxide fell 40% in urban areas in China, 20% in Belgium and Germany, and 19-40% in different areas of the US. The UN's Policy on 'Covid-19 in an Urban World' stated that with an estimated 90% of all reported Covid-19 cases, urban areas have become the epicentre of the pandemic. It also pointed out that several new scientific studies suggest that poor air quality is correlated with higher Covid-19 mortality rates. Nitrogen dioxide Nitrogen dioxide (N2O) is one of a group of gases called nitrogen oxides. Nitrogen dioxide is naturally formed in the atmosphere by lightning and some are produced by plants, soil, and water. Nitrogen dioxide is a major air pollutant as it contributes to the formation of photochemical smog. It has various impacts on human health. Nitrogen dioxide is also formed by burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. Other forms of nitrogen dioxide in cities are from motor vehicle exhaust. Also, nitrogen dioxide is formed from petrol and metal refining, electricity generation from coal-fired power stations, other manufacturing industries, and food processing. Unglued gas heaters and cookers are the major sources of nitrogen dioxide in Australian homes.

The environmental gains could be temporary if the cities re-open without policies to prevent air pollution and promote de-carbonization

- *It also stated that nitrogen dioxide fell 40% in urban areas in China, 20% in Belgium and Germany, and 19-40% in different areas of the US.*
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Hazardous Waste (Management & Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016

In order to strengthen the implementation of environmentally sound management of hazardous waste in the country, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has amended the Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management & Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016.

For the first time, Rules have been made to distinguish between Hazardous Waste and other wastes. Other wastes include: Waste tyre, paper waste, and metal scrap, used electronic items, etc. and are recognized as a resource for recycling and reuse. These resources supplement the industrial processes and reduce the load on the virgin resource of the country.

The salient features of Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management & Trans boundary Movement) Rules, 2016 include the following:-

- The ambit of the Rules has been expanded by including 'Other Waste'.
- Waste Management hierarchy in the sequence of priority of prevention, minimization, reuse, recycling, recovery, co-processing; and safe disposal has been incorporated.
- All the forms under the rules for permission, import/export, filing of annual returns, transportation, etc. have been revised significantly, indicating the stringent approach for management of such hazardous and other wastes with simultaneous simplification of procedure.
- The basic necessity of infrastructure to safeguard the health and environment from waste processing industry has been prescribed as Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs), specific to waste type, which has to be complied by the stakeholders and ensured by SPCB/PCC while granting such authorisation.

- Procedure has been simplified to merge all the approvals as a single window clearance for setting up of hazardous waste disposal facility and import of other wastes.
- Co-processing as preferential mechanism over disposal for use of waste as supplementary resource, or for recovery of energy has been provided.
- The approval process for co-processing of hazardous waste to recover energy has been streamlined and put on emission norms basis rather than on trial basis.
- The process of import/export of waste under the Rules has been streamlined by simplifying the document-based procedure and by revising the list of waste regulated for import/export.
- The import of metal scrap, paper waste and various categories of electrical and electronic equipments for re-use purpose has been exempted from the need of obtaining Ministry's permission.
- The basic necessity of infrastructure to safeguard the health and environment from waste processing industry has been prescribed as Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) specific to waste type.
- Responsibilities of State Government for environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes have been introduced as follows:
  - To set up/ allot industrial space or sheds for recycling, pre-processing and other utilization of hazardous or other waste.
  - To register the workers involved in recycling, pre-processing and other utilization activities.
  - To form groups of workers to facilitate setting up such facilities.
  - To undertake industrial skill development activities and ensure safety and health of workers.
- List of processes generating hazardous wastes has been reviewed taking into account technological evolution in the industries.
- List of Waste Constituents with Concentration Limits has been revised as per international standard and drinking water standard.

The following items have been prohibited for import:

- Waste edible fats and oil of animals, or vegetable origin;
- Household waste;
- Critical Care Medical equipment;
- Tyres for direct re-use purpose;
- Solid Plastic wastes including Pet bottles;
- Waste electrical and electronic assemblies scrap;
- Other chemical wastes especially in solvent form.

- State Government is authorized to prepare integrated plan for effective implementation of these provisions, and have to submit annual report to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) is mandated to prepare an annual inventory of the waste generated; waste recycled, recovered, utilised including co-processed; waste re-exported and waste disposed and submit to the Central Pollution Control Board by the 30th day of September every year.

The amendment has been done keeping into consideration the "Ease of Doing Business" and boosting "Make in India" initiative by simplifying the procedures under the Rules, while at the same time upholding the principles of sustainable development and ensuring minimal impact on the environment.

Some of the salient features of the Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management& Transboundary Movement) Amendment Rules, 2019 are as follows:

- Solid plastic waste has been prohibited from import into the country including in Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and by Export Oriented Units (EOU).
- Exporters of silk waste have now been given exemption from requiring permission from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- Electrical and electronic assemblies and components manufactured in and exported from India, if found defective can now be imported back into the country, within a year of export, without obtaining permission from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- Industries which do not require consent under Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974 and Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981, are now exempted from requiring authorization also under the
- Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management & Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016, provided that hazardous and other wastes generated by such industries are handed over to the authorized actual users, waste collectors or disposal facilities.

What necessitated this?

- In spite of having a significant plastic pollution load of its own, and a ban on plastic waste imports, imported PET bottles from abroad for processing SEZ.
- The influx of PET bottles was quadrupled from 2017 to 2018.
- Indian firms are importing plastic scrap from China, Italy, Japan and Malawi for recycling.
- India consumes about 13 million tonnes of plastic and recycles only about 4 million tonnes.

What is hazardous waste and what are the concerns associated with it?

Hazardous waste is the waste that poses substantial or potential threats to public health or the environment.

- Rapidly growing industries in the country have contributed in the production of large part of hazardous waste material. The sources of hazardous waste are basically agricultural and agro industries, medical facilities, commercial centres, household and the informal sectors.
- Therefore, to reduce environmental hazardous proper attention is required during disposal of such waste, because it cannot be disposed of by common means like other by products of our daily lives.

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CHEMICAL SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Vizag Gas Tragedy : Root Cause Analysis

[By Er. AZAD S., Former Research Associate, C.P.C.B]

According to the report submitted by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to the Hon'ble NGT, gross human failure and clear cut negligence of the LG Polymers led to the disaster at Vizag - killing 12 peoples while leaving thousands of other sick or affected. Leakage of toxic Styrene gas/vapours started at 2:42 am on 7th May 2020. Tertiary Butyl Catechol (TBC) - inhibitor chemical to slow down the reactions - was not topped up in the storage tank since 1st April. Chilling of the storage tank was also not maintained. As a result styrene started auto polymerising and led to rapid reaction and heating. As the temperature rose, styrene started vapourising. Following increase in pressure in the tank, safety valves on the M6 tank rooftop opened and started emitting vapour. Actually the tank was of an old design and no temperature and pressure monitoring was done at the middle or top of the tank where vapours get accumulated and monitoring gauge was at the bottom of the tank only. There was no interlocking system between the temperature monitoring and refrigeration systems. Also there was no external automatic water sprinkling arrangement for cooling of the tank in case of temperature increase.

Manual sprinklers could not be accessed as it was an affected area. Even Siren/ Alarms were not automatic and with manual alarm system having its controls in the hazard area, no warning could be issued. Safety preparedness was not there to respond to the leakage. Thus even basic safety protocols were not followed. The response of the officers and workers present at the factory to the gas leak was also slow. The pumping of emergency chemicals to stabilize the tank was started at about 5:15 am, more than 2 hours after the gas/vapours leakage was detected, by which over 800 tonnes of gas/vapours had already leaked causing disaster.