

Karachi

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10 hospitals, 17 factories to submit environmental plans within a month



The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) on Tuesday gave 10 private hospitals and 17 factories a month’s time to submit Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) detailing their mechanism for disposal of hazardous waste.

Under environmental laws and health regulations, effective disposal systems including incinerators are mandatory for all public and private hospitals and laboratories in Sindh. Even the apex court has previously directed the relevant authorities to make arrangements for installation of incinerators for proper disposal of hazardous and potentially infectious waste at healthcare facilities.

As per a Sepa spokesman, the healthcare facilities asked to submit EMPs within a month include M K Hospital, Isra Hospital, Red Crescent Hospital, Ghani Hospital, Afzal Medical Centre, Asim Clinic, Memon Hospital and Hajra Hospital.

Interestingly, not a single major or tertiary care hospital has been asked to submit an EMP though many do not have incinerators installed and either dump hazardous waste or hand it over to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) for disposal.

The Sepa spokesman said 17 factories have also been asked to submit EMPs and failure to do so would lead to action against them under the relevant laws.

Four factories fined

The environmental watchdog also imposed a collective fine of Rs1 million on the managements of four factories in Hyderabad for discharging untreated waste and emitting smoke from chimneys.

The spokesman said Sepa had so far imposed fines of Rs8.5 million on various factories, while two restaurants had also been sealed. On August 11, Sepa imposed a collective fine of Rs5.5 million on 19 industrial units for violating environmental laws including discharge of effluent in open spaces and failing to conduct environmental impact assessments before launching the projects.

The 19 units included factories, textile mills, water purification plants and housing projects and action was taken for violation of Sections 11 and 17 of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014.

Section 11 concerns discharge of effluent from industries and emission of hazardous gasses, while Section 17 deals with initial environmental examination (IEE) and environmental impact assessment (EIA).

A few days prior, the environmental agency had fined four industrial units and had issued warnings to 28 others for pollution. Alucan Pvt Limited, Alkhair Dying and Schneider Electric were fined Rs200,000, while Adamjee Textiles was fined Rs100,000.

In February this year, the province’s environmental watchdog had shut down six factories in different industrial areas of Karachi after their representatives failed to prove that they were not responsible for polluting the Lyari and Malir rivers.

After hearing the arguments of representatives of the factories accused of pollution, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) took action under Section 21 of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014.

The watchdog directed them to immediately close down their operations because they were discharging untreated industrial effluent into the rivers, a Sepa official had told The News. The factories ordered to halt production include pharmaceutical companies, textile factories, ghee and oil mills, and lubricant and steel factories located in SITE, Bin Qasim, Korangi, Landhi, North Karachi and Federal B Industrial areas.

The watchdog had also directed another 24 companies and firms to submit reports of their environmental audit within 30 days, while CEOs of eight companies were asked to appear before the Sepa director general.

A Sepa official said they had issued notices to 107 factories and industries in Karachi for violating environmental laws, and polluting air and water by discharging industrial effluent into the environment without treatment.

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