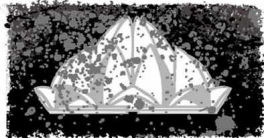


The Times of India 06.03.2017

## Waste plants 30-100m from houses fine



NEW DELHI: The [Central Pollution Control Board](#) has closed the recommended [gap](#)

between waste-to-energy incineration power plants and residential areas from the 300-500 metres specified in the solid-waste management manual of the centre's Swachh Bharat Mission to 30-100 metres in its draft guidelines. This has upset experts and alarmed citizens about the possible impact of pollution and toxic residues.

Scarcity of land for buffer zones led [CPCB](#) to reconsider the current norms. "Giving the buffer zone area around the core facility will be a challenge as land is not available and mostly encroachment has taken place in many places around landfill sites," says the guideline document, adding, "...in most towns no land is available for treating solid waste, neither as landfill sites nor for disposal through other techniques..." Ironically, the same document cites the examples of countries like China, which prescribes a 300-metre buffer, and Malaysia, 350 metres.

The Swachh Bharat norms prescribed not only a larger buffer area, but also required waste-to-energy plants to be located in

zones earmarked for medium and heavy industries as well as the presence of a functional landfill to accommodate incineration residues.

CPCB's document hints at the future when it refers to the Okhla waste to energy plant, which has been embroiled in a legal battle for nearly a decade now. It says that facilities like these, where there is no land available for a buffer zone, should adopt "technological interventions". "Selection criteria," the guidelines state, "are determined according to the specific technology requirements."

"If these guidelines are finalised we will see a mushrooming of waste-to-energy plants," said Swati Sambyal, programme officer, environmental governance (municipal solid waste), Centre for Science and Environment.

Sambyal pointed out that incineration is not suited to India where 60% of the waste generated is organic. Explaining that there also exists the problem of waste segregation at source, she suggested instead a focus on composting and biogas generation in a decentralised manner.

Experts are also dismayed that the CPCB document lists "incineration" as a waste management process. They have long held that while waste management can be viably done through processes such as refuse derived fuel (RDF), composting and landfilling, incineration is not a legitimate method, leading as it does to pollution and toxic residues.

Meanwhile, residents of Sukhdev Vihar, in the proximity of which a waste-to-energy plant has come up, are aghast by the new norms. "We have decided to move the Supreme Court. The public health aspect is being completely ignored," said Ranjit Devraj, a resident. NGT which heard the residents' earlier petition on the plant causing air pollution, recently allowed the power plant to function with certain conditions after imposing an environmental compensation.