

# Norms don't need industries to make emission data public

## CPCB's Guidelines Inconsistent With Pollution Action Plan

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**New Delhi:** The Central Pollution Control Board's guidelines for the continuous emission monitoring systems (CEMS) of industries are not consistent with the comprehensive action plan for air pollution control in the national capital region (NCR).

While the action plan, drafted by CPCB and the Supreme Court-mandated environment pollution control

authority (EPCA), underlined that the CEMS data would be available on an open platform for public scrutiny, the recent guidelines stated that the data would be shared continuously only with the state and central pollution control boards for corrective action.

CPCB, in 2014, issued directions under Section 18(1)b of the water and air acts to all state pollution control boards to direct 'red-category', highly polluting industries (such as pulp and paper, sugar, cement,

oil refineries and pharma) to install online emission monitoring systems. But compliance was slow. Recently, CPCB directed all such industries in NCR to install CEMS and connect them to the board's server by March 31. CPCB is still in the process of ensuring compliance to this order.

While the idea behind installing CEMS is to ensure that industrial emissions meet norms and are transparently monitored, lack of transparency in transmitting the data

has been making the compliance difficult. The data of Sterlite Copper in Tuticorin, which was closed by the Tamil Nadu government following protests, was not in public domain after its closure, making it difficult for the affected residents to verify emission levels from the plant. Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) claimed that it was transmitting the CEMS data while the plant was open but the historical data was not in public domain.

CPCB's guidelines emphasised on bringing self-discipline in the industries rather than strict monitoring that CEMS is supposed to ensure. CEMS, it said, may be used for "strengthening the monitoring and compliance through a self-regulatory mechanism... Efforts need to be made to bring discipline in the industries to exercise self-monitoring and compliance". The CPCB-empowered laboratories will be engaged as third party agencies for all activities related to installation, calibration and validation of the CEMS data.

"Comprehensive Action Plan has provided for sharing of CEMS information with public and keep emission data on an open platform progressively. This is already a law here. But this point which is important for transparent and effective compliance and monitoring has been missed out in the new guidelines," said Anumita Roy Chowdhury, executive director, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

### WHAT THE GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUOUS EMISSION MONITORING SYSTEMS SAY

**1** Emissions exceeding prescribed standards or norms will be considered a violation. Average values decided by CPCB will be used for compliance check

**2** Spikes with duration of less than a minute will be dealt with separately and not considered for data averaging

**3** Violations will invite SMS/email from state pollution control boards, asking for immediate feedback on corrective action

**4** Values recorded during calibration or during preventive maintenance will not be considered for assessing data. Shutting down of plant will also be excluded

Parameters required to be monitored by these systems include particulate matter (PM), total fluoride, ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), chlorine (Cl<sub>2</sub>), HCl (hydrochloric acid) and HF (hydrofluoric acid), TOC (total organic carbon)/THC (total hydrocarbon)/VOC (volatile organic carbon), CO (carbon monoxide)



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