

Close down all brick kilns, orders CPCB

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NAGPUR: Bad days are ahead for brick kiln owners and workers as Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has directed closure of all kilns that do not have sanction of state pollution control boards (SPCBs). Very few kilns bother to take clearance from SPCBs and hence most of them will be affected.

The apex pollution control body has ordered closure of these kilns due to air pollution and wants the owners to convert them to induced draft brick kilns (zigzag brick setting with rectangular shape). These new type of kilns have fans in their chimneys that propel the smoke upwards with force. Consequently, the smoke does not remain at lower level.

A source in Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) said that the order was difficult to implement. "Around 1.5 lakh kilns in the country face closure. They employ about one crore people. In Nagpur district there are some 1,000 small brick kilns and about 50 big ones. They produce 10 crore bricks a year," he further said. The official stressed that each kiln owner will have to spend some lakhs to meet CPCB requirements.

The CPCB directive has made it compulsory for kiln owners to pave the moving area around the kiln with bricks to reduce fugitive dust emissions. This clause should be inserted in the consent conditions while granting consent by SPCBs. The owners will also have to ensure that fine dust does not accumulate around the kiln.

The directive issued on July 27 asks SPCBs to acknowledge its receipt within a week and submit action taken reports (ATRs) within two weeks.

The directive was issued after the CPCB chairman inspected various types of kilns on June 15. It came to light that the workers were working in highly polluted conditions. Due to movement of trucks on the unpaved area around the kiln, fine dust was present in the air all the time. This area had a layer of fine dust five to six inches thick. The people residing near the kilns also complained of air pollution.

CPCB experts assessed that the conditions worsened during winter due to minimal dispersion of pollutants and high concentration at ground level. The chairman also found out that most of the kiln owners were operating without the consent of SPCBs and had not even bothered to apply for the same.

The chairman has directed all SPCB officials to close down the kilns and if they do not cooperate, register cases against them under Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.