

Act Now to Improve Air Quality in Delhi, Says CPCB

In the latest attempt to improve air quality in Delhi, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) Wednesday issued directions to the state governments of Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to immediately begin taking action against “visibly polluting vehicles”, overloaded vehicles and open burning of biomass, leaves, tyres and other such items.

The CPCB, invoking its powers under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981, has specified a total of 42 ‘action points’ that these governments need to initiate in order to check pollution from vehicles, crop burning, industrial emissions and construction activities. Many of these plans have to be acted upon with immediate effect.

For others, timelines of 30 days, 60 days or 90 days have been specified.

The states have been asked to launch an extensive awareness drive against polluting vehicles, install weigh-in motion bridges at all entry points in Delhi, prevent parking of vehicles in non-parking areas, introduce early alarm system for traffic congestion on major routes and for route diversions, decongest pathways, and even consider flexible or staggered timings to decongest the roads.

For construction sites, the states have been told to ensure that appropriate covers are put in place, and construction material and waste that can result in dust are handled only after sprinkling water on them. These material and waste must also be carried only in closed carriages.

The states have been given 30 days to take “strict action” against unauthorised brick kilns, and 60 days to ensure “strict action” against industrial units not complying with pollution standards. “Extraordinary situations call for extraordinary measures. Air pollution in Delhi has become very serious. We have been taking a series of actions in the last nine months to improve air quality in Delhi. The states now need to act upon these directions seriously and immediately,” Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters.

The Environment Ministry has held several rounds of talks with these states in the last few months on these issues. Javadekar claimed that as a result, crop burning incidents in UP and Haryana, one of the major causes of poor air quality in Delhi, had already come down by about 25 per cent.