

Factory safety framework set for a major overhaul

Updated on March 29, 2021

The administrative and regulatory framework for factory safety is set for an overhaul with the government weighing plans to set up a Central Factory Safety Board and State Factory Safety Boards in each State.

The move to strengthen the administrative and regulatory framework for factory safety follows the gas (styrene vapor) leak incident at LG Polymers Ltd in Visakhapatnam on May 6 and 7 last year, which claimed the lives of 12 persons and injured hundreds.

The Central Factory Safety Board will act as a single point agency to regulate all safety laws, rules and regulations. Its primary role would be to set up safety norms, standards, build capacity of the State boards and deal with large hazardous factories.

Currently, industrial safety in factories is governed by the Factories Act 1948, Indian Boilers Act 1923, Indian Electricity Act 1910, Petroleum Act 1934, Explosives Act 1884 with different rules framed under these laws.

The existence of multiple agencies, weak structure of the organisation/department concerned, absence of compliance/third-party verification systems have made it a process driven more by licence permit rather than for facilitating industries, a government official said. This has led to gaps in factory safety regulations, he said.

Regulatory authority

To address the environmental regulatory gaps, it is proposed to constitute all State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) as “authorities” under the Environment (Protection) Act. Besides, all A category projects will be sent with the recommendation of the SPCB to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF & CC) for clearance. For B category projects, SPCB shall be the final authority. As such, the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) will be part of the SPCBs.

However, to assist the SPCBs, State Expert Appraisal Committees (SEACs) can be constituted under the Environment (Protection) Act.

The grant of environment clearance (EC) and consent to establish (CTE) under Air Act and Water Act will be simultaneously examined by the SPCB for both categories of projects.

All officers of SPCBs may be appointed under the Environment (Protection) Act for all categories of industries to effectively monitor and implement the provisions of the Act and rules and notifications issued thereunder.

Panel to probe gas leak

The high-power committee set up to probe the gas leak has suggested relocating the factory of LG Polymers to one of the established notified industrial estates. The panel, comprising representatives from Central agencies and the State government, has called for safety audits of all the styrene storage/processing/trading/importing units across India. The Centre may also stipulate that no unit shall sell/trade in styrene Monomer with any unit that does not have the required safety features for storage and handling of the chemical.

Disclaimer: The content above is taken from the source mentioned

Resource: Business Line, 29 Mar 2021

Copyright © 2019 Aparajitha Corporate Services Pvt., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.