Govt. asks states to ensure strict fire safety measures in hospitals

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- The states have been told to conduct a detailed review with officials from the health, power and fire departments.
- Several Covid facilities have seen fire incidents this year.
  Taking note of the recent fire incidents at various health facilities, the central government has asked states and union territories to prepare a detailed plan of action to ensure that fire safety measures are in place in all hospitals.

"It needs to be highlighted that either because of high temperature, lack of maintenance or high load on the internal wirings within the facilities, short-circuiting takes place, leading to fire incidents and consequential loss of life and essential infrastructure," Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla in a letter.

He said that care should be taken to put in place a strategy that would ensure no fire incidents occurs in any of the health facilities, especially Covid-19 dedicated facilities, both in the government and private sector.

The states have been told to conduct a detailed review with officials from the health, power and fire departments.

"The states have been requested to issue directions to the concerned officials at various levels, that heath facility should be visited by field-level officials, to examine internal wirings and availability of functional safety equipment as per fire safety guidelines, within these facilities, and necessary remedial action be taken immediately in case any deficiencies are found," the government said in a statement.

Bhalla also drew attention to the recently issued advisory of the director-general (fire services, civil defence and home guards), MHA on fire safety in hospitals and nursing homes.

He highlighted that a large number of Covid-19 cases are under treatment in Covid-dedicated health facilities across the country.

"In most of the cases, oxygen supported beds, ICU beds, and ventilators are critical interventions, and therefore, it is important to ensure that there is the uninterrupted power supply on a regular 24x7 basis, in all the hospitals and medical facilities," he wrote.
He emphasized that saving every life is a priority, and it is critical to ensure that required support is provided to all health facilities managing Covid-19 by taking

requisite actions in advance to avert any incident, which could hamper effective health care delivery to patients.

Recently, at least 18 patients were killed in a fire that broke out at the Patel Covid hospital in Gujarat's Bharuch.

A few days ago, another similar incident was reported from Surat in Gujarat when 16 critical Covid-19 patients were rescued and shifted to safer places after a fire broke out in the ICU of a private hospital.

In Maharashtra, a fire incident at Virar killed at least 15 people last month.