

Guidelines for Fire and Safety Audit

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The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had prepared an “Integrated Guidance Framework for Chemicals Safety in Respect of the Isolated Storages and Industries Covered Under Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals (MSIHC) Rules, 1989” in compliance with the directions of the Hon’ble Green Tribunal dated 11.06.2021 in the matter of Original Application no. 60/2021. The framework covers chemical accident scenarios like spillages/ leakages of hazardous chemicals, fire, explosion or other incidents arising out of handling of hazardous chemicals and provides guidance to industrial units on conducting safety audits in adherence to Indian Standard, IS:14489:2018 - Code of Practice on Occupational Safety & Health Audit. The guidance mandates that competent agencies, duly accredited by the Accreditation Board of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, can only undertake safety audits. In case of absence of such accreditation, the competent agencies must possess the approval of Chief Inspector of Factories (CIFs) appointed under Factories Act, 1948 to undertake safety audits.

The CIFs of State/ Union Territories (State/ UTs) are nodal agencies to ensure operational safety at chemical industrial units. As per the provisions of MSIHC Rules, 1989, the CIFs can issue improvement notice under Rule 19 to industries for contravening its provisions including failure in safety audit, and ask them to comply with prescribed measures within 45 days. The details of industrial companies that failed in safety audit along with action taken against such companies is maintained at State/UT level by CIFs.

To prevent industrial accidents and chemical emergencies, the MSIHC Rules, 1989 prescribe for undertaking safety audits, preparation of on-site emergency plans by industries, preparation of off-site emergency plans by district authorities and carry out mock drills for assessing preparedness. To support States/ UTs in dealing with industrial disasters, the MoEFCC and CPCB has been providing technical support in the form of precautionary advisories, chemical safety framework and sharing technical recommendations on operation of industries dealing with hazardous chemicals.

This information was given by Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change in Lok Sabha today.