

Graded action plan to come into force on October 17

Originally the provisions for very poor and severe air quality were to come into force on October 15, but it was postponed by two days to accommodate power requirements for the FIFA U-17 being held in Delhi.

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The graded action plan lays down emergency provisions that are enacted for different levels of air pollution in Delhi NCR. (HT Photo)

The graded action plan to tackle pollution in Delhi-NCR by the Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority, will come into force on October 17th this year, members of the Supreme Court-appointed body said.

The initial plan was to bring into force provisions to tackle very poor and severe levels of air pollution on Oct 15, as a precautionary measure. This includes the closure of the Badarpur power plant, that is a major contributor to air pollution in Delhi. However, officials at the Central Pollution Control Board said that there was no date for the implementation of the stricter provisions.

The Delhi government requested that the 'very poor and severe' air quality provisions not be implemented till the FIFA U-17 World Cup are ongoing. The provisions include shutting down of the Badarpur power plant that is 'key' for power supply during the football tournament. The last match in Delhi is being played on October 16.

However, officials at the Central Pollution Control Board, said there was not date set for the implementation of the provisions of the graded action plan, that come into force when air quality across the Delhi NCR region touches very poor and severe levels.

"We will not allow the air quality to dip to the very poor and severe levels," Dr D Saha, at the air quality lab in CPCB, said. "We expect that air quality will not fall to those levels even during and after Diwali."

Earlier this month the Supreme Court banned the sale of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR till November 1, triggering a heated debate about judicial interference in the cultural practices of Hindus, in this case the burning of firecrackers to celebrate Diwali.

Saha expects that the Supreme Court's ban on the sale of firecrackers will make a difference.

Sunita Narain, EPCA member, and head of the Centre for Science and Environment said that firecrackers are only "one more factor" adding to the winter pollution in Delhi-NCR. The big factors remain vehicular pollution and pollution from thermal power plants.

Power plants are a major contributor to Delhi's air pollution. They alone contribute to 11% of the capital's PM2.5 load (Particulate matter that is 2.5 microns or less in diameter).

Delhi NCR region grapples with acute smog problem during the winter months when air is relatively still, especially during Diwali time, which is falling on October 19 this year.