

## Managing Domestic Hazardous Waste

### What is the issue?

\n\n

Beyond the conventional wet and dry waste management, it is now time that domestic hazardous waste is given enough attention too.

\n\n

### What is domestic hazardous waste?

\n\n

\n

- Domestic hazardous waste is defined under the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016.

\n

- It includes items such as -

\n

\n\n

\n

- i. discarded cans of paint and pesticide
- ii. sanitary waste such as disposable diapers and sanitary pads
- iii. items of biomedical waste such as expired or discarded medicines, broken mercury thermometers, used needles and syringes
- iv. e-waste such as tube lights and CFL bulbs
- v. items such as used batteries and button cells, all generated at the household level

\n

\n\n

\n

- With changing lifestyles, homes are awash with different chemicals and products.

\n

- These, often without us being aware, are corrosive, explosive, flammable or

toxic.

\n

- They are harmful not only for human health but also for the environment if not disposed of properly.

\n

\n\n

## How risky is lead?

\n\n

\n

- Leftover paints and varnishes are examples of common polluting wastes in homes, with toxic heavy metals and flammable solvents.

\n

- Lead, a highly toxic metal, is found in lead-based paints to which young children are particularly vulnerable.

\n

- As, even low levels of lead exposure can cause cognitive disabilities in children.

\n

- WHO lists lead exposure as one of the top 10 environmental health threats globally.

\n

- Many countries have phased out lead from their paints.

\n

- **India** - In 2016, India brought in a regulation which allowed a maximum of 90 ppm lead content in paints.

\n

- However, a latest study shows that concentration of lead in paints manufactured by small and medium enterprises in India remains very high.

\n

- Paint samples with as high as 199,345 ppm lead content, more than 2,000 times the maximum limit were found.

\n

- Worryingly, only 16% of the 160 consumers surveyed were aware of the issue of lead in paints.

\n

\n\n

## What are the other dangerous ones?

\n\n

\n

- Other examples of hazardous domestic waste are pesticides for mosquitoes,

flies, cockroaches and rats.

\n

- These are as poisonous for humans as they are deadly for their targets.

\n

- Fungicides and garden herbicides are also very toxic, not only when used but also when disposed of. Many are also carcinogenic.

\n

- About 2-3% of these liquids typically remain in supposedly empty containers.

\n

- Motor oils, greases and lubricants are all flammable but can be recovered as fuels when pooled.

\n

- Broken glass is also one of the most commonly dangerous domestic hazardous wastes.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the ambiguity in the rules?**

\n\n

\n

- There are enough rules for domestic hazardous waste with many overlaps in coverage for different types of waste.

\n

- Domestic hazardous waste comes under the ambit of Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2016.

\n

- Hazardous waste generated by industries and large offices is separately covered under the Hazardous Waste Rules 2016.

\n

- Some biomedical waste is included in the definition of domestic hazardous waste.

\n

- But only waste from healthcare establishments is covered under the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules 2016.

\n

- Similarly E-waste Management Rules 2016 are applicable to e-waste including computers, printers, TV, fluorescent and other mercury containing lamps.

\n

- However, lead acid batteries from home inverters and cars come under Batteries (Management and Handling) Rules 2001.

\n

- So with multiple sets of rules and weak capacity for enforcement, the

situation on the ground remains very bleak.

\n

- This is coupled with the fact that awareness of the hazard among those who generate and handle waste is almost non-existent.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the other concerns?**

\n\n

\n

- There are hardly any deposit centres for domestic hazardous waste, which are the bedrock for effective disposal.

\n

- The Biomedical Waste Management Rules 2016 require safe disposal of only healthcare waste.

\n

- Only 10-25% of biomedical waste is infectious or hazardous.

\n

- But, if not properly handled, it presents physical, chemical and microbiological risk to the general population as well as those who handle it.

\n

- Discarded hazardous medical waste leads to unintended release of drug resistant microorganisms in the environment.

\n

- According to the WHO, in 2016, 4,90,000 persons developed multi-drug resistant TB globally.

\n

- Drug resistance is starting to complicate the fight against HIV and malaria, as well.

\n

- A WHO report also shows that there were 65,000 cases of multi drug-resistant and Rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis in India in 2017.

\n

\n\n

### **What should be done?**

\n\n

\n

- Modern lifestyle comes with new responsibilities; that on waste management calls for keeping three bins - dry, wet and hazardous.

\n

- A portion of responsibility for proper disposal of waste lies with consumers

and waste generators as well.

\n

- But significantly, it is the responsibility of the municipal authorities under the SWM Rules 2016.

\n

- They should collect hazardous waste quarterly or periodically, and/or set up deposit centres, where such waste can be dropped off by waste generators.

\n

- The authorities must also ensure safe storage of the waste and its transportation to the hazardous waste disposal facility.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Indian Express**

\n

