

Soon, separate law to regulate e-waste

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SOON, India is set to have a separate law to regulate the burgeoning problem of electrical and electronic waste in the country. Recognising the need for an environmentally sound management of hazardous waste, the Central Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) has finally made public its first draft rules on e-waste, called E-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2010.

The proposed rules will soon be published in the Gazette of India and would consider public objections and suggestions for a period of 60 days, according to a MoEF notification on the department's official website. Following the notice period, the rules will be finalised under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, it said.

So far, India has had no specific guidelines for recycling and dumping of e-waste. Recently, a study by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) had projected that the Waste

Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in Mumbai's MMR region could go over 50,000 tonne by 2015. In 2007, the e-waste generation was 20,000 tonne. According to the MoEF notification, the objectives of the draft e-waste rules "were to enable the recovery and/or reuse of useful material from WEEE, thereby reducing the hazardous wastes destined for disposal".

The e-waste rules will apply to every producer, dealer, collection centre, refurbisher, dismantler, recycler, auctioneer or consumer involved in the manufacture, processing, sale, purchase of electrical and electronic equipment or components, the notification states. It imposes specific responsibilities on each stakeholder, involving registration under the state pollution control boards (SPCB), e-waste disposal, transportation, reuse and accident reporting and follow-ups.

The rules spell out clear-cut procedures for seeking authorisation and grants the SPCB

the right to cancel or suspend authorisation of parties that fail to comply with the conditions. On their part, the state boards will have to prepare and submit to the Central Pollution Control Board an annual report with regard to the implementation of these rules by the September 30 every year, the notice states. Following this submission, the CPCB will prepare a consolidated annual review report on management of municipal solid waste and forward it to the central government along with its recommendations before the December 30 every year, it states. "Penalties and punishments for any violation shall be applicable as per the Act," it concludes.

In Mumbai, while few local bodies welcomed the e-waste management rules as "much awaited", an official of the MPCB said: "E-wastes were already covered under the Hazardous Waste Management rules of 2008. Making a separate rule for them is just adding another regulation to the already existing ones."