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URBAN SERVICES



Urban Resource Centre

A-2, 2nd floor, Westland Trade Centre, Block 7&8, C-5, Shaheed-e-Millat Road, Karachi.
Tel: 021-4559317, Fax: 021-4387692, Email: urc@cyber.net.pk, Website: www.urckarachi.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/URCKHI Twitter: https://twitter.com/urc_karachi

85pc of oil tankers don't meet standards: Ogra

Estimating up to 85pc of all tanker lorries transporting oil products are not complying with prescribed standards, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) will ask the oil market company (OMC) concerned to pay Rs10 million in fines and compensation to the families affected by recent oil spill and subsequent inferno in Ahmedpur East.

Sources told Dawn that Ogra had hired the services of two separate third-party inspection companies to ascertain whether the OMC had complied with the 2009 Ogra technical standards for the transportation of petrol, and to identify the reasons for the tragic accident of June 25. With the death of three more victims on Wednesday, the toll in the tragedy rose to 214.

Besides the multitudes of casualties, the inferno also gutted 75 bikes and three cars.

OMCs have been similarly fined in at least two cases in the recent past: accidents in Nankana Sahib and Multan in 2016. In both cases, the companies were fined and made to pay for the compensation, which was given to families of victims by the government.

Ogra — consisting of its chairperson and two members — is expected to immediately take up reports from both third-party inspectors, along with the recommendations of a two-member Ogra technical committee, which will be submitted today (Thursday).

Documents suggest the OMC in question did not comply with Ogra's orders for submission of an initial incident report within 48 hours, as required. Sources said the ill-fated tanker did not even meet safety and transportation standards of the company itself, let alone Ogra's 2009 technical standards for road transport vehicles.

Regulator to fine OMC concerned Rs10m; Ahmedpur East tragedy death toll rises to 214

"Shell Pakistan Limited did not comply" with directives to immediately furnish an accident report, an Ogra order said, asking the company to "explain its position for not adhering to the authority's directive".

Sources said the company's response to the accident was also found wanting under the domestic and international standards for such contingencies, adding that Ogra and the provincial government were collecting evidence.

The standards required OMCs to cordon off an accident area with the help of the nearest emergency response team, and an oil spill is considered a serious offence under international standards.

According to an official, it had also come to light that the tanker operator had already offloaded about half of his 50,000 litre cargo before the incident.

Ogra spokesperson Imran Ghaznavi told Dawn the regulator had constituted a two-member team of executive directors to examine reports from third-party inspectors. The team will submit a report to the authority, on which it will proceed further.

While he declined to go into detail, he confirmed that some specific information and documents had been sought from the OMC in question.

An official said Ogra was considering taking a harsh stance, not only against the OMC, but was also planning actions against all other non-compliant companies.

The oil industry, on the other hand, has started lobbying against any punitive action in view of bleak compliance standards. The industry is pushing for a grace period of up to two years to allow tanker lorries and OMCs to comply with regulatory standards and is sending out signals suggesting that extreme steps like a ban on non-compliant tankers would lead to product dry-outs.

Ogra has asked the OMC to provide details of whether the tanker in question was owned by it or outsourced through contractors, along with proofs of agreement, compliance with safety standards and evidence of clearance by the chief inspector of explosives and compliance with road, axle load and tyre standards of the National Highway Authority (NHA).

A report on motor vehicle fitness certificate and minimum standards of the OMC for its private lorries and the check lists for dispatch of products have also been summoned. Specifically, the company has been asked to explain its standard operating procedures (SOPs) for an emergency and why the spill could not be prevented or contained.

Sources in the oil industry concede there were serious shortfalls on the part of the companies and their transportation contractors, but maintained that these could not be overcome overnight.

Shell Pakistan has reported that the tanker belonged to a private contractor, Marwat Enterprises, and contained 50,000 litres of petrol when it met with an accident near Safeerwala village, 6km from Ahmedpur East.
(By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn 01, 06/07/2017)

Bahawalpur tragedy: OGRA imposes a paltry Rs10m fine on oil firm

The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) has held a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell responsible for the tanker explosion that killed more than 200 people near Bahawalpur last month.



According to a report prepared by the regulatory authority, the tanker carrying gasoline for Shell Pakistan Ltd (SPL) did not meet the set requirements. "Moreover, the fitness certificate issued to the tanker also turned out to be fake," says the report.

More than 150 people were killed on June 25 after an overturned oil truck exploded in a huge fireball while it was surrounded by crowds scavenging for fuel in Ahmedpur East. The death toll has since crossed the 200 mark.

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In the investigative report, Ogra held the private company responsible for the incident, but ordered it to pay a meager Rs10 million as penalty.

In addition, the regulator ordered the company to pay Rs1 million in compensation to the families of each of those killed and Rs500,000 for each person injured.

In its findings, the report describes that the main accident i.e. rolling over of the tanker off the road and subsequent spillage of petrol is clearly attributed to non-professional driving.

American NGO to donate skin grafts to Bahawalpur fire victims

"Outbreak of fire is attributed to lack or delayed response of the local administration and Motorway Police to cordon off the area for restricting the approach and gathering of the general public at the site of the accident.

"The lack of awareness to the general public for staying away from the site of such accident can possibly cause the explosion, leading to a national tragedy."

The report states that such accidents can be mitigated through safety standards and this specific accident could have been avoided if the lorry was compliant to the applicable safety laws and rules.

The investigators have found that the tank lorry, TLJ 352, was hired by the SPL from its haulier, Marwat Enterprises, which has been found to be non-compliant with the Pakistan Petroleum Rules 1937.

The Ogra report says, "Since the tank lorry was found to not have CIE license, it is regarded as non-complaint with the rules. As per NHSO-2000 requirement, 50,000L tank lorry must have 5-6 axles but the said tank lorry had 4 axles.

"Although, the SPL has provided a certificate of fitness by the Motor Vehicle Examiner issued under Quetta. However, the same is [found to be] fake as confirmed by the Chief Minister Investigation Team (CMIT), Punjab.

"The SPL has failed to provide the preload checklist of their own company. Instead, they have submitted their haulier's i.e. Marwat Enterprises checklist (Annexure-IX). If the same was in place or exercised/monitored in actual, the said lorry could have been denied for loading the product by the SPL."

It further states that the SPL has failed to provide its own ERP and submitted the ERP of its haulier i.e. Marwat Enterprises (Annexure-X). "This shows the SPL's entire dependence on the ERP of its haulier, which is very casual attitude of the company of the caliber of SPL to handle the emergency at the time of spill etc, and the same is therefore, not acceptable.

Tanker fire: Lack of burn units in south Punjab exacerbate situation

"As per Rule 69 of the Pakistan Oil (Refining, Blending, Transportation, Storage and Marketing) Rules, 2016, a person, who contravenes any provisions of the ordinance, these rules, terms and conditions of the licence, or the decisions of the authority, shall be punishable with fine which may extend to ten million rupees and in case of a continuing contravention with a further fine which may extend to one million rupees for every day during which such contravention continues."

The report concludes that the authority has decided to impose a penalty of Rs10 million on the SPL which shall be deposited by the company within three working days of the receipt of this order.

"SPL shall comply with the decision, failing which the authority would be constrained to initiate proceeding against the company to impose further penalty or any other strict action under the law/rules inter alia including suspension of the marketing activity."

(By Zafar Bhutta The Express Tribune 01, 08/07/2017)

'Sindh govt has failed to build 2,300 public toilets'

The Pakistan Peoples Party-led government might have carried out mega development during the eight years of its ruling over its own home-province, but it has failed to build public toilets for the people.



This is the stunning revelation that a two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC) wondered upon on Tuesday, during the hearing of a petition seeking facilities such as ramps for handicapped persons and public toilets.

23% population still defecates in the open, says report

The petitioner, who is the chairperson of Raah-e-Rast Trust, had stated in his pro-bono petition that the people, particularly women and children, face a lot of inconvenience due to the non-availability of public toilets at bus stops, markets, hospitals, parks and other public places.

KMC's admission

In December 2012, a legal adviser for the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) had provided a list of public toilets to the court. According to the list, only 19 places in Karachi had public toilets. The court was told that seven other places had been identified where public bathrooms should be provided.

Meanwhile, a law officer representing the provincial government had claimed that such facilities were provided at a district level.

Therefore, the judges had assigned an unusual task to the top provincial regulatory body of lawyers, the Sindh Bar Council (SBC). SBC was directed to get the provincial law officer's claim verified through its members by inspecting the availability of public toilets in each district. The members were asked to submit their reports in this regard.

Residents will not be free to openly defecate in Sindh by 2025

During Tuesday's proceedings, a report was filed on behalf of the SBC. The council's representatives told the judges that the provincial and local government authorities had failed to set up 2,300 toilets which were required to be built across the province at public places, including bus stops and parks.

The report stated that there were no public toilets in eight districts of the province, which included Karachi's south and west districts, Dadu, Kandhkot, Ghotki, Nawabshah, Mirpur Mathelo and Mehar.

This revelation led the judges to direct the provincial and local government law officers to submit their reports regarding the state of the public toilets in each district of the province.

Headed by Justice Irfan Saadat Khan, the bench directed them to submit such reports by September 12.

Case history

The petitioner, Agha Syed Attaullah Shah, had taken the authorities to court over this important issue of the lack of toilets for the public.

Public toilet plans go down the drain

Due to the dearth of public toilets, the petitioner claimed that people were forced to relieve themselves on footpaths, playgrounds, abandoned plots, bushes and other public spaces, which pollutes the environment.

He alleged that the non-governmental organisations had repeatedly called upon the relevant authorities to take steps in this regard, yet the city government was reluctant to identify places for building public toilets.

In his plea, Shah had told the judges that there were 970 bus stops, 133 hospitals, 182 graveyards and public parks where the facility was not available. "Each of the 970 union councils in 18 towns has more than a couple of commercial plazas without public toilets. Over 133 general hospitals or clinics are also without this facility," he claimed.

Therefore, the petitioner had pleaded the court to declare that public toilets with sustainable sanitation were necessary for the health, honour and dignity of the public.

(By Naeem Sahoutara, The Express Tribune, 13, 16/8/2017)