

Air quality in bengaluru down

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Heavy vehicular movement, roadworks have led to Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter shooting up



With over 5,000 vehicles being added daily in the city, controlling air pollution is becoming a problem, says a KSPCB official.— file Photo: K. Murali Kumar

Masks are back in fashion in the city. Not just as a precaution against H1N1, but also to bear the long ride through choked city streets where billows of smoke envelop busy junctions.

Recently, the US Embassy in New Delhi asked its staff to install air purifiers to protect themselves against the capital's rising air pollution.

The situation in rapidly urbanising Bengaluru may soon call for air purifiers in houses.

Heavy vehicular movement, roadworks and construction activities have led to Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) drastically shooting up across non-residential zones in the city.

Even sensitive locations such as Victoria Hospital — which abuts the busy K.R. Market and is surrounded by metro construction — and NIMHANS — which, apart from its proximity to the Outer Ring Road, has an ill-advised bus-stand on its premises — now show dangerously high levels of RSPM.

Exercise in futility

Every year, the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board plays out its exercise in futility by sending directions to civic agencies to reduce air pollution. While officials said some guidelines — for instance, allowing only CNG or LPG autorickshaws — were being followed, others, such as disallowing commercial activities in residential zones and removal of vehicles older than 15 years from the streets, were yet to be implemented strictly.

“With over 5,000 vehicles being added daily in the city, controlling air pollution is becoming a problem,” said a KSPCB official. The transportation sector causes nearly 45 per cent of the total pollution in the city. T.V. Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (IISc.), said dealing with the transportation sector was critical to ensure air quality improves.

“The public transport system needs to be strengthened to ensure reduction in private vehicles on the road. Only going after 15-year-old vehicles is not enough. Many new vehicles also have high emission. The crackdown on vehicles should be on emission standards and not age,” he said.

(Reporting by Mohit Rao)