

++PART III. NATIONAL REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR CSD-14/15 THEMATIC AREAS

A. ATMOSPHERE/AIR POLLUTION

Government focal point(s): Ministry of Local Government, Housing, Squatter Settlement & Environment.

Responding ministry/office(s): Department of Environment

1.0 Progress made in implementation

- 1.1 The principal atmospheric pollutants from stationary sources in Fiji are: dust from quarries, asphalt plants, cement mills, stone crushers, furniture making and road dusts from vehicles.
- 1.2 The existing legislation Public Health Act has provisions that control air pollution from adverse impacts to human health. This is being enforced by the Central Board of Health of the Ministry of Health. The Land Transport Act has provisions to address vehicle emissions. This is being enforced by the Land Transport Authority. Mobile monitoring equipments are being used.
- 1.3 The assessment of air quality and the levels of air pollution are conducted as the need arises. This is the case when a possible air pollution incident needs to be verified for prosecution. The Public Health Act and its regulations require that levels of air quality and air pollution be determined to ensure continual human health.
- 1.4 For accurate assessment, it is important that the upgraded air monitors are used. It is important that all components of polluted air are identified so that all possible gaseous interactions are determined. It is useful that the standards of acceptable quantity of pollutants in any sample of air is available. The standard should be internationally and locally recognised.
- 1.5 Due to relatively rapid urbanisation in Fiji, industries and vehicles are also increasing. Controlling agencies are having difficulties to maintain control over these. In consequence the pollution situation is deteriorating. Apart from increasing cases of manifest environmental abuse (eg. A cement factory), background levels are also strongly suspected to be increasing. But in the absence of regular monitoring this cannot be verified.
- 1.6 The Public Health Act is being reviewed. This is to strengthen its provisions to address severe incidents of pollution that it currently lacks. Training of potential health inspectors are being done by the Fiji School of Medicine.
- 1.7 The construction and refrigeration industries are committed to improve indoor air circulation systems. This is appropriately provided for in the National Code of Building Practices. The provisions are enforced and monitored by the Building

Health Inspectors. The proper air-conditioning units are installed to enable healthy air circulations in buildings.

- 1.8 The need for healthy indoor environments are paramount especially for buildings that accommodate large numbers of people during sporting or conference activities. Fiji has a tropical climate that necessitates buildings with a lot of natural air-flows. Together with the need to conserve energy, it has been important to align buildings to the natural flows of air.
- 1.9 The building line along subdivided lots facing vehicle roads are established to protect the buildings and the occupants from adverse impacts from the roads. These impacts include air pollution from vehicle emissions. The set-back for buildings from the roads depend on the scale of usage of the roads. More usage means longer distance of houses from the roads.
- 1.10 Another urban planning mechanism relating to transportation and roads is the provision of buffer strips along main roads and highways to protect people and developments from impacts including air and noise pollutions. Another related planning mechanism is the aligning or routing of major roads away from residential areas. This also includes the siting of new residential areas away from major roads.
- 1.11 The Town Planning Act and the Land Subdivision Act impose the building line and buffer strip requirements. The application of these requirements are done as new plans are submitted to the Department of Town & Country Planning for consideration. The challenges arise when developers request the waivering or reduction in distances of building lines from roads because of limited land or lot areas.
- 1.12 The Fiji Country Programme for the phasing out of ozone-depleting substances is being implemented by the Ozone Unit of the Department of Environment. The refrigeration and air-conditioning industry is working closely with the Department of Environment and the Customs Authority to regulate the imports of ozone-depleting substances according to established quotas and phase-out years. Furthermore, an Ozone Depleting Substances Act is being enforced with the relevant permitting and licensing systems.
- 1.13 Training of technicians that handle ozone-depleting substances have been taking place and trained technicians have been certified. The facilities that use and store these controlled substances have also been certified.

2.0 Trends and Emerging Issues

- 2.1. With the adoption of new technologies in commercial and industrial activities, the presence of new types of gaseous substances in the atmosphere is most likely. It becomes very important to clarify the characteristics of these new substances in order that they can be controlled.

- 2.2. It is being realised that with new technologies and raw materials comes new types of air pollutants that were not yet addressed by existing legislations. The existing legislations are to be constantly reviewed and updated. The necessary trainings to identify and control the new pollutants need to be developed. The onus need to be put on new industries with new technologies to establish safe and healthy operational practices. Hefty penalties that are deterrents need to be put in place.

3.0. Constraints and challenges

- 3.1. A major constraint in managing air pollution is the lack of expertise in the relevant authorities like the Ministry of Health, municipal councils, and rural local authorities. The regional academic institutions need to make available the relevant courses of study.
- 3.2. The Fiji Government is yet to provide for all the needs for controlling and monitoring air pollution. It still relies on regional and international initiatives to address fully air pollution issues. The lack of expertise in relevant authorities that are responsible for controlling air pollution is a problem. There is the need to develop more relevant trainings.
- 3.3. Problems arise when unlicensed technicians and facilities handle the ozone depleting substances. Effective monitoring systems need to be put in place. Another challenge is the monitoring of imported goods that might contain the controlled substances. The border-control authorities like the Customs Authority have been trained to identify these substances. It is important to ensure the compliance of importing agencies with the ODS Act.
- 3.4. Outdated ineffective existing legislation has been a problem. The risks to human health have always been prevalent in any major incident with air emissions. These incidents have always remained unresolved with appropriate convictions and penalties.
- 3.5. In this day and age of drug trafficking with the related toxic chemicals and gases, the Fiji Islands has been seen as a good location for drug transshipments. The presence of the illicit drugs and associated illegal manufacturing activities are always a great risk to both human and natural environments.
- 3.6. The trade in illicit drugs are done at the international level. The presence of appropriate tracking authorities are under-resourced at present.