

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND YOU

**PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC
CONSULTATIONS FOR:
COAL FUELED
THERMAL POWER PLANTS**



CAG

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

1. What are Thermal Power Plants?

Electricity is generated using different sources of energy like coal, oil, hydro, nuclear, solar, biomass etc. Power plants which use gas, coal, or any petroleum-based product like naphtha are called Thermal Power Plants (TPPs). Coal fueled power plants are the most popular with 60% of all energy generation coming from these plants.

2. What are the environmental problems with TPPs fueled by coal?

TPPs fueled by coal are environmentally polluting. The largest problem with the use of coal is the disposal of fly ash that is generated from burning it. This fly ash directly impacts air, land and water quality and poses a major threat to the environment if improperly managed.

3. What is the impact of TPPs fueled by coal on air quality?

Coal based power plants affect the air quality of the surrounding regions because it emits:

- a. Sulphur and Nitrogen Oxides (air pollutants)
- b. Carbon di oxide (contributes to global warming)

People living within 5 Km. radius of the plant suffer from several health impacts such as respiratory disorders because of the emission of these gases.

4. How do TPPs fueled by coal affect water resources?

Most coal fueled power plants are located near the coast because of their heavy requirement of water for cooling and disposal of waste. The coolant water released is often at a much higher temperature than ambient temperature causing harm to aquatic life. Also, the water slurry used to take fly ash from the plant to the ash pond is often discharged directly into the sea causing widespread pollution.

5. Do noise levels increase when a thermal plant is set up?

Yes, noise pollution is caused when TPPs are established. The noise directly affects:

- c. employees who are exposed to noise pollution
- d. adjacent localities which are affected due to increased transportation activities

6. What are the social and economic effects of the power plants?

There are three major effects of TPP on the life of the people

- a. Power plants require huge area for the operation of the plants. So land of local people is acquired and there is a problem of resettlement and rehabilitation
- b. As thermal power plants are labor intensive, employees settle in the vicinity of the plant. The increase in the population will affect the civic amenities provided by the local government.
- c. Work related hazards in the thermal plant

7. How are these Environment Impacts of Coal are fueled TPPs predicted and mitigated?

Before the establishment of any coal fueled power plant, the owner of the project has to conduct a study that predicts the potential environment impacts of the project and suggests methods to mitigate the same. This process, called the Environment Impact Assessment is mandated by the MoEF, the nodal agency for all environment related issues in the country.

8. Who clears the EIA for Thermal Power Plants?

- a. If it is < 500 MW, it is cleared by the state government.
(State Environmental Impact Assessment Agency)
- b. If it is >500 MW, it is cleared by the central government.
(Central Environmental Impact Assessment Agency)

9. Who prepares an EIA report?

The project proponent prepares the EIA report. It is mostly done by the consultants appointed by the project proponent.

10. What do I do if I am affected by the project?

When a TPP is being planned, the EIA report is prepared based on the Terms of Reference given by the Impact Assessment Authority. After the preparation of this document, people affected by the project are called to participate and share their concerns about the project. This process is called 'public consultation'. It ensures the participation of local people and stakeholders in various developmental activities.

11. How can I participate in a public consultation process?

You can participate in a public consultation process by: a. expressing your concerns through written responses and/ or b. by directly participating in a public hearing that will be held in your district.

12. What documents should be made available to me to understand how the impacts of the proposed project?

The impacts of the project, will be given in the EIA Report. An executive summary containing the salient features of the project and the entire report itself, both in English and the local language should be made available to you as soon as a public consultation is called for.

13. Where will these documents be available?

The executive summary can be perused in the following offices:

- a. District Collector Office
- b. Office of Chief Executive officer of Zila Parishad or
- c. Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation/local body
- d. HO of the State pollution control Board and regional office
- e. Concerned department of the state government dealing with the subject of environment You can also get your own copy of it by paying a nominal charge.

14. Where will a copy of the entire EIA report be available?

The complete EIA report is made available for reference at Ministry's office in Delhi (Paryavaran, Bhavan, C.G.O Complex, New Delhi 110003)

A comprehensive EIA report takes 1 year to prepare .So project proponent may furnish Raid EIA report to the IAA based on one season data (other than monsoon)for examination of the project. Comprehensive EIA can be submitted later if requested by IAA.

IAA can also give exemption to the project proponent if the project is unlikely to cause significant impact on the environment. When exemption is granted project proponent may be asked to furnish additional information as required.

The Details of the project and findings of the EIA study should be made available to concerned parties or environmental groups by the project proponent.

15. What should I look for in an EIA Report for coal fueled TPPs?

- a. exact location of the project.
- b. Accuracy of baseline data. A comprehensive EIA should have 12-18 months information.

16. What are the mitigating measures that should be taken by the TPP operator to reduce the impact on the environment and people?

1. appropriate stack height should be provided to control emission of particulate matters
2. beneficiated coal usage has been made mandatory from 2001 to reduce the ash content in coal
3. wet ash disposal system to be proposed. The ash pond water should also be recycled
4. there must be cooling towers to check temperature of water discharged back into water sources

17. How do I submit a written Response on perusing the EIA report?

After reading the EIA report and understanding the impacts of the project, you can express your views, comments, suggestions and objections to the SPCB within 30 days from the date of publication of the notification for the public hearing. Even if you are not directly affected by the proposed project you can send written comments and responses.

18. How do I participate in a public Hearing

While it is essential for written responses to be submitted it is also critical that all the people affected by the project attend the public hearing. It is organized by the concerned state pollution control Board (SPCB) or the Union territory Pollution Control Board to enable widest possible public participation. It is advisable to submit comments in the form of written responses even at the Public Hearing.

19. How will I know when the public hearing will be held?

The PCB should announce a date for the public hearing in:

- i one major national daily
- ii one regional vernacular daily This notice should appear 30 days before the date of the public hearing.

20. Who can attend a public hearing?

All residents of the area environmental groups, and other person located at the project site/sites and affected by the project can participate in a public hearing. Persons who are likely to be affected by the undertaking the project may include

- a. any person who might be affected if the proposed project gets clearance
- b. the proponent of the project project
- c. any person who is not affected by the proposed project but a part of group working for environmental well being in that locality.
- d. local authority within whose limits, the project is proposed is to be located

21. Who will form the panel for public hearing?

The following people will constitute the public hearing panel:

- a. Representative from SPCB
- b. Representative of state govt dealing with environment
- c. District collector or his nominee,
- d. Representatives of local bodies such as municipalities or panchayat
- e. Three senior citizens of the area nominated by the district collector

22. Where should the public hearing be held?

The venue of the public hearing should be fixed either at the site of the proposed project or at the office of gram panchayat of the concerned village. If the project is located in more than one district/ State then separate hearing is required for each district/ State. If the venue that has been chosen is not convenient for the project affected people to attend, written request must be made to the SPCB demanding a change in venue.

23. Who should preside over the public hearing and what should be the quorum for the hearing?

The EIA notification states that only the District Magistrate (same as District Collector) or his/her authorized representative not below the rank of the Assistant District Magistrate shall supervise the public hearing. They will be assisted by the representative of SPCB.

The public hearing cannot take place if atleast half the members prescribed panel and officers from SPCB and the Department of Environment and Forests and three senior citizens are not present.

24. How is a public hearing conducted?

The public hearing should begin with a presentation by the project proponent on the proposed project and summary of draft report. The presentation should detail the social and environmental impacts of the project. Every person present at the venue should be given opportunity to ask information and clarifications from the TPP operator.

26. How will the public hearing be officially documented?

- a. The proceedings should be officially minuted.
- b. The authorities should video film the proceedings.
- c. Person participating in the hearing can arrange for their own filming of the process.
- d. Objections raised by the people should be included in the minutes.
- e. The minutes have to be read to all persons present at the hearing before being accepted. The contents should be explained in the local language.
- f. The reason for denying permission to other than local people to talk should be minuted.

27. What happens after the public consultation?

After the public consultation,

- a. Official minutes of the meeting should be displayed prominently. It should be displayed at the concerned panchayat office, Zilla Parishad, District Magistrate Office and the PCB
- b. The minutes should include..
 - i. All issues raised by the public.
 - ii. Comments and commitments made by project proponent/representative
 - iii. In English and vernacular language.
 - iv. Include full list of all the people who attended the hearing.

- c. Video or the CD of the public hearing should be annexed to the minutes.
- d. If it differs from the minutes read out during public hearing, then write to all the officials concerned and MoEF. State clearly the problem with the minutes.

28. Who gives the Environmental clearance?

The proceedings of the hearing has to be forwarded to the regulatory authority-MoEF for category A project and State level Impact Assessment Agency for category B projects.

29. What is the duration of validity of the clearance?

Environmental clearance once granted is valid for 5 years. From commencement of the Construction or operation of the project.

30. How will I know whether the proposed project is given clearance?

The status of the environmental clearance is to be made available in the website of MoEF. This can also be obtained from the MoEF's regional office.

31. Where do I appeal against the grant of Environmental clearance?

Appeals can be made before the National Environmental Appellate Authority (NEAA) in New Delhi as per the NEAA Act, 1977

*This booklet was prepared
as a part of :*

The Civil Society Collaboration
for Environmental Governance,
an initiative of WWF-India,
New Delhi



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