



The Air Pollution Rules, 2014: What Does It Mean for T&T?

The Air Pollution Rules, 2014 became law on January 23rd, 2015. On December 1, 2015, the first phase of implementation of the Rules will come on-stream with the beginning of **Source Emitter Registration** throughout T&T. This six-month phase will then be followed by the **Permitting** phase, during which the EMA will be working on an individual basis with Source Emitter Registrants to determine whether there would be a requirement to apply for an Air Pollution Permit.

For the average citizen reading this article or seeing recent newspaper advertisements about the Air Pollution Rules, 2014, this week's article will seek to clarify what these Rules are really about, whom is likely to be impacted, and ultimately, what benefit the Rules would potentially offer the population of T&T.

To begin with, an understanding of the term 'Source Emitter' is important to clarifying who the Rules apply to. By definition, a Source Emitter refers to any facility from which currently an air pollutant or pollutants releases into the atmosphere. It also includes proposed facilities which in the near future will release pollutants into the atmosphere.

In defining an air pollutant, it can be described as certain substances released into the atmosphere above a specific quantity, concentration or level, or which has an impact on the atmosphere. In Schedules 1 & 2 of the Air Pollution Rules, 2014, the maximum allowed levels of emissions of air pollutants are listed. Air pollutants have been classified into the following categories:

Categories of Air Pollutants

- **Particulates** – this includes microscopic solid or liquid matter suspended in the Earth's atmosphere. Particulates are among the most dangerous form of air pollution because of their ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and blood streams. One example of the impact of the release of particulate matter into the atmosphere by man-made means is the creation of smog. The composition of particulate matter that generally causes visual effects such as smog consists of Sulfur Dioxide, Oxides of Nitrogen, Carbon Monoxide, mineral dust, organic matter and elemental Carbon also known as black carbon or soot.
- **Non-Metallic Inorganic Substances-** this refers to releases of substances such as Carbon monoxide (CO), Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and Sulfuric acid (H₂SO₄). Man-made releases of these substances typically come from industrial and commercial processes such as petrochemical manufacturing and auto body repair shops.
- **Metallic Substances-** such as mercury or lead can be released into the atmosphere as a by-product of some industrial and commercial processes. Industrial boilers and heaters, and incineration of municipal, hazardous and biomedical wastes are major sources.
- **Organic Substances-** these typically originate from the breakdown of organic material. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) describes a category of common organic pollutants which can result from a wide range of industrial, commercial and institutional activities. Waste incineration, oil and gas extraction and production, and dry cleaning are examples of the activities that generate organic air pollutants.

What Activities are exempted from the Air Pollution Rules, 2014?

- **Motor Vehicles**

Exhaust fumes emitted from motor vehicles are not subject to the Air Pollution Rules, 2014. However, under the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act of Trinidad and Tobago, motor vehicle owners are required to have their vehicles in good road-worthy condition and are required by Law to pass inspection.

- **Outdoor Fires**

Although a source of air pollution, the Air Pollution Rules, 2014 does not address planned or illegal outdoor fires. The **Agricultural Fires Act Chapter 63:02** requires that individuals obtain a permit from the nearest Fire Station. During the dry season in T&T (December 30 to June the following year), all planned outdoor fires are supposed to be supervised by the Fire Services Division.

- **Indoor Air Quality**

Air quality in the workplace is not addressed in the Air Pollution Rules, 2014. Instead, the **Occupational Safety and Health Act Chapter 88:08** addresses air quality issues at the workplace.

Benefits to T&T of having the Air Pollution Rules, 2014

With the Registration Phase of the Air Pollution Rules, 2014, the EMA will be able to establish an inventory of the types, quantities and locations of the sources within T&T releasing air pollutants into the atmosphere.

With this information, the EMA and the Government of T&T would be better positioned to understand the current impacts of air pollution on T&T's atmosphere. This information will also facilitate the strategic management of the nation's air quality, with the ultimate aim of protecting public health from the adverse effects of polluted air.

During the permitting phase of the Air Pollution Rules, 2014, facilities granted permits will be required to comply with stipulated minimum levels for air pollutant emissions as set out in their permits. Facilities exceeding permissible levels will therefore be monitored and regulated through this mechanism.

Individuals or organisations wishing to learn more about the Air Pollution Rules, 2014 can visit the EMA's website at www.ema.co.tt.

-END-