
Emergency Measures to Combat Air Pollution (EMCAP)

Prepared by

Parents and People Against Air Pollution

Consolidated Short-Term Solutions for NCR Air Pollution



Citizens' Action Plan – Winter 2025-26 & Beyond

Delhi/NCR pollution is not a knowledge, behaviour, or technology problem – it is an enforcement and political will problem. Awareness alone fails; real solutions require strict enforcement that causes short-term inconvenience but delivers results. Globally proven examples include London's ULEZ (50% NO₂ reduction in central areas since 2019 via charges on polluting vehicles), Paris's low-emission zones and odd-even bans (significant NO₂ drops during enforcement), and Mexico City's Hoy No Circula (initial reductions, though long-term mixed due to weak enforcement).

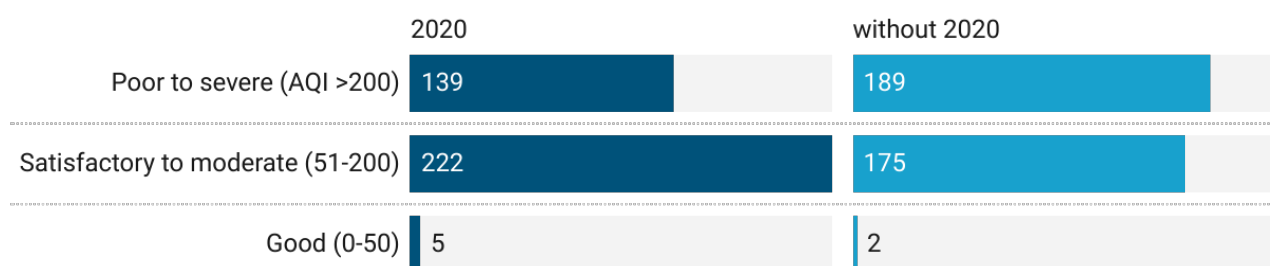
Speaking in the Indian context, these will succeed only when backed by high-level oversight (e.g., monthly PM-CM-Chief Secretary Zoom reviews + public dashboards, as used for COVID and CSS targets)

A reality check

Chart 1 below, based on CPCB's own data, shows how the quality of air has been over a period of 7 years (2017-2023). AQI is categorised in six ranges in India. A few things stand out. One, **Delhi has had only two days of healthy air per year!** Two, more than half a year people are inhaling air unfit for breathing. Three, and quite remarkably, even for 2020, a lockdown year, things have only marginally been better. It's clear there is something systemically wrong.

Chart 1. Quality of Delhi's air over time

Average number of days per year



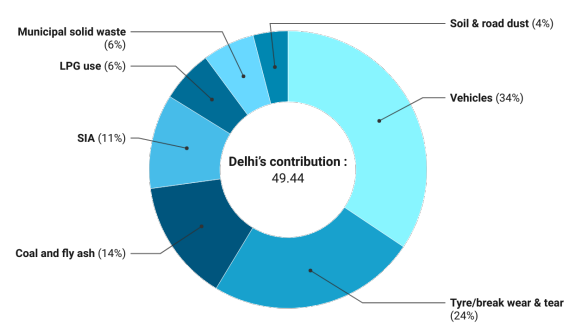
Source: Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), GoI • Created with Datawrapper

So, this requires a system-wide solution, tinkering on the margins will not help. But a systemic solution, which will require planning, time, and resources, does not mean we do nothing in the immediate to ameliorate the situation to the extent possible. In this document, we primarily focus on what can be done in the short term as immediate measures to be implemented every winter till we find a long term solution.

What causes air pollution in Delhi NCR?

An extensive 2023 report prepared by IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, TERI New Delhi, and Airshed Kanpur shows that, even during these winter months, when sources of pollution external to Delhi are at their peak, half of the PM_{2.5} levels can be apportioned to Delhi itself (chart 2). Vehicles alone contribute 58% – 34% from the exhaust and 24% due to wear and tear of tyres/brakes – to this total.

Chart 2: Source apportionment of PM_{2.5} from within Delhi during winter months



Source: 2023 report prepared by IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, TERI New Delhi, and Airshed Kanpur • Created with Datawrapper

What should be done about it?

We would like to recommend the following immediate winter measures (Oct 15 - Feb/Mar 15, All NCR) to be taken source-wise.

Transport:

- 1. Mandatory Car-Pooling & Traffic Rationing:** Apps + office enforcement (min 3 occupants); dedicated car pool lanes on all the roads with heavy fines for violators (like what was done during the commonwealth games); odd-even extended to two-wheelers; stricter exemptions-free version; all cars entering CP, ITO, Nehru Place, Karol Bagh must park at edge lots and take electric shuttles, with no exceptions.
- 2. Vehicle Bans & Restrictions:** No new ICE sales/registrations from April 1, 2026 (one-year notice); ban diesel passenger vehicles (including phatphat sewa) in Delhi NCR; ban roadside diesel repair workshops; winter ban >1500 cc personal vehicles, and daytime truck entry (allowed only midnight-6 AM only); Sunday vehicle lockdowns, except in an emergency (only public transport to be used otherwise); only EV/CNG haathi and chote haathi vehicles to ply.
- 3. Mandatory tyre & brake dust standards for fleets:** Delivery fleets, cabs, buses must use certified low-dust tyres and brake pads within 6 months.
- 4. Public Transport:** Increase the fleet of DTC buses from the current 7,000 to 20,000 with all the new ones being EV-buses; decrease metro ticket prices by half during this period; for last mile connectivity for the metro, increase the number of feeder DeVi buses, and have battery operated feeder-bicycles as well as infrastructure for parking personal cycles; replace the current school buses with DeVi buses and make it mandatory for parents to use school buses for their children.

5. **Work & School Shifts:** Mandatory WFH for capable sectors during inversion/“Severe” days; online schooling only when necessary (prioritize vehicle bans to keep schools open).
6. **Increase fuel prices:** Increase diesel prices at petrol stations; differential pricing for 2-wheelers and 4-wheelers (increase the prices of the latter).
7. **Incentivise EV usage:** Cheaper charging options; better charging infrastructure; subsidise EV vehicle purchases.
8. **PUC & Compliance Tech:** Quarterly mandatory with auto-challans; update to international norms; AI/blockchain/drones for tenders/monitoring; petrol pumps to randomly test smoke opacity + PUC before refuelling during winter with denial for dirty vehicles.
9. **Goods & Fleet Management:** Government/corporate fleets cut 25% (self-certified); delivery apps mandate PUC/service records.
10. **Road dust:** identify top 50 dust-generating road stretches and resurface or micro-seal them in 90 days.

Construction and Industry:

1. **Construction Holiday & Dust Control:** Shutdown non-essential construction Oct-Feb; green cloth cover on all open on-site construction material; no new large private projects (>300 sq m/>4 floors) post-April 2026; daily mechanical sweeping + sprinkling on 2,000+ km roads (tender 40 contractors by Sep 2026).
2. **Industrial & Power Measures:** Suspend Waste-to-Energy plants Oct-Feb; diesel gensets banned; all plants/industries to international norms; heavy monitoring/fines.
3. **Power tariff measures:** Implement **pollution emergency power tariff** during this period; electricity made cheaper at night, costlier during day peaks; cross subsidise EV charging stations from the revenue generated through increased tariff.
4. **Enforce Industrial Compliance Without Exception:** Pollution Control Boards (PCBs) should inspect all non-conforming industries and order immediate shutdowns of violators—with no compromises or token actions.
5. **Economic Compensation:** Temporary support for affected workers (daily wage/delivery) via Pollution Cess from builders/industry.

Open/waste burning:

1. **Open Burning & Fireworks:** Zero-tolerance (no wood/coal/waste, incl. Lohri); lifetime nationwide fireworks ban (weddings/Dussehra/Diwali/Christmas); heavy purchase tax on firecrackers in general; temporary closure of roadside food using coal/wood; identify top 500 hotspots and shut solid-fuel cooking for winter, provide LPG/electric carts instead.

2. Prevent Waste Burning Through Active Response: Assign the fire brigade and municipal sprinkling teams the responsibility to immediately extinguish waste-burning incidents. Treat this as a key performance indicator (KPI) for both agencies, ensuring accountability and swift response.

3. Stubble Burning: coordinate with neighbouring states to control stubble burning with incentives given to farmers to dispose off the stubble through other non-polluting means.

Enforcement & Governance:

1. **High-Level Oversight:** Monthly PM-CM-Chief Secretary Zooms with dashboards.

2. **Immediate Administrative Actions:** Letters to CMs Delhi/Haryana & Union Environment Minister; share data on grassing, anti-smog, dust covers, waste burning, industries, CAQM updates, health hazards; contacts for DPCC/Haryana PCB/Greater Noida.

3. **Strengthen Auditing and Accountability Mechanisms:** The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has undertaken few environmental audits recently. Municipal audits related to pollution control, waste management, and infrastructure need to be revived, standardized, and strengthened.

4. **Incentivising police action:** Pollution performance ranking of police districts; Monthly public ranking of traffic police zones on emission reduction, towing, idling fines.

5. **Predictive Air Quality Modeling and Real-Time Public Communication:** Develop a predictive AQI monitoring and forecasting system with a simple, publicly accessible interface. Regularly update this data on a citizen-friendly portal or app so people can plan their travel, outdoor activities, and fuel use based on anticipated air quality trends.

Misc. measures:

1. **Crowd & Event Controls:** No gatherings >1,000 Oct-Mar; weddings limited to 100 guests (two functions/family unit), tax venues and financial penalty for exceeding 100; no large concerts.

2. **Road & Encroachment Clearance:** Voluntary encroachment removal by April 2026, then demolitions; designate e-rick/auto points; immediate towing; stop MCD tolls until automated; CSIR-CRRI 10-day choke-point fixes.

3. **Waste & Litter Control:** Strict fines for garbage/littering; enforce plastic ban with penalties.

4. **Rapid Greening & Dust Mitigation:** Grass/pave roadsides; daily sprinklers; satellite surveillance for stubble/waste with 24x7 dashboard.

Political Consequences of such measures

There are some political consequences that are quite straightforward and it's best to put it upfront, so that adequate measures can be taken against any backlash. There is no point discussing non-starters. No policy can be implemented without public support, so anticipating the response and being ready will make things easier to deal with, some of which are enumerated next. In fact for these measures to be successful on the ground, public participation would be key, people will have to participate with the government in campaigns for shared inconvenience.

In the case of households, such measures would mean higher costs, particularly in transport costs (pooling/WFH), limited weddings/events, inconvenience for old vehicles. At the same time, this would come with, in purely monetary terms, lower health bills (asthma/COPD savings). There may be a backlash from car owners, builders, wedding industry, religious groups (fireworks/Lohri) and perhaps some vote loss in urban middle-class pockets, but only if these measures are poorly communicated. For the industries, there will be a temporary revenue dip because of shutdowns, fleet cuts, fines, genset bans but there would be long-term workforce health/productivity gains. For the government, enforcement costs (~₹500-1,000 cr/year for monitoring/tech), compensation funds would become higher but this may get offset by reduced healthcare burden. Even in the narrowest political calculation, one can only imagine the national leadership image if AQI drops visibly.

We all know it will be a win-win for all the residents in the end. It's the interim that people have to bear with. So, while it's true that all such measures will inconvenience people of the NCR region, but the residents have to bite the bullet if they want their children and elderly (and themselves) to have a healthier life.

Let's make Delhi liveable and breathable again!