

Stricter SWM rules notified: Residential societies, government-run buildings to local bodies will have to process solid waste at source

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, on Tuesday to give effect to this new framework.

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It places stringent onus on bulk generators – which account for 30 per cent of waste – to process solid waste at source.

From April 1, urban and rural local bodies and 'bulk generators' ranging from residential societies, universities to government-run buildings will have to follow stricter solid waste management rules, which will replace the existing decade-old regime to collect, segregate and manage garbage in the country. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, on Tuesday to give effect to this new framework.

The new Rules broadens the scope of responsibilities, increases linkages for reuse of waste as fuel in boilers, cement kilns, to promote circular economy, and introduces clear penalties for non-compliance. It places stringent onus on bulk generators – which account for 30 per cent of waste – to process solid waste at source.

Four streams of mandatory segregation at source – wet waste, dry waste, sanitary waste and special care waste – have been defined. This will cover waste from paper and kitchen waste to sanitary towels and diapers to tube lights, waste batteries.

Bulk generators have been defined as entities which fulfill either of these criterion – buildings with floor area of 20,000 square metres or more, water consumption of 40,000 litres per day or more, generation of 100 kg/day waste or more. This will cover central and state government departments, local bodies, commercial establishments, residential societies, universities and hostels, among others.

These bulk generators must ensure that the waste is collected, transported, and processed in an environmentally sound manner. As per a government release, this has been done to significantly reduce the burden on urban local bodies and promote waste management at source.

As part of the 'extended responsibility' placed on these bulk generators, they will be made accountable through centralised monitoring. "Bulk waste generators are required to process wet waste on-site, as far as possible or obtain an extended bulk waste generator responsibility certificate where on-site processing is not feasible," the government release said.

About 1.85 lakh tonnes/day solid waste is generated in the country, of which 1.79 lakh tonnes/day is collected, 1.14 lakh tonnes/day is processed or treated and 39,629 tonnes/day is landfilled, as per Central Pollution Control Board's 2023-24 data.

In a first, the Rules also empowered local authorities in hilly and island areas to levy fees from visitors or tourists for handling and management of solid waste, and adopt measures to

regulate the number of visitors in keeping with their waste handling capacity.

The focus of the new framework is on a ‘waste hierarchy’ which prioritizes prevention and reduction, followed by reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal, with prevention being the most preferred option.

In effect, landfills will only take in non-recyclable, non-energy recoverable waste and inert material, with higher landfill fees prescribed for local bodies for sending unsegregated waste to landfills.

The landfill fee for unsegregated waste will be higher than the cost of segregation, transportation and processing of segregated waste.

Priyanka Singh, programme lead, Council on Energy, Environment and Water said that if implemented properly, the new rules will significantly improve waste management in India. “A new centralised online portal for real-time tracking will ensure robust data generation and monitoring, essential for better logistics and planning. Furthermore, the introduction of Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR) will target 30-40% of city waste, effectively promoting waste reduction at the source,” she said.



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