

Scorecard on Environment and Safety in SIPCOT, Cuddalore January to December 2007

SIPCOT Area Community Environmental Monitoring

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SIPCOT Cuddalore – A Regulatory Blackhole

In the 12-month period from January to December 2007, SACEM reported a total of 33 major pollution and/or workplace incidents involving environmental damage, and/or injury of workers, residents and commuters. This is up from 24 major pollution and/or workplace incidents reported over a 12-month period ending December 2006. At least 146 persons, not including fisherfolk suffering minor skin injuries from exposure to contaminated water, reported being exposed or injured during the data period.

During 2007, more reports were registered where entire villages have complained of various health problems due to the pollution from the units in SIPCOT. On at least two occasions, different villages have complained of severe health problems due to the odour incidents. In July 2007, Eachangadu village was severely affected by odour from SPIC. All villagers complained of one or more of the following symptoms: nausea, headache and vomiting. The school in the village had to be shut for a day because of the problem. In another case in Kudikadu village, many villagers reported symptoms of fever, nausea and vomiting. Villagers said their symptoms were triggered or aggravated by the noxious odour from Shasun Chemicals. At least 70 residents were admitted in the General Hospital in Cuddalore. No investigations were conducted into whether or not the odour levels were indeed high as alleged, and whether or not pollution may have had a triggering or exacerbating effect on the health problems of the villagers.

Table A: Trends of 3 yrs of monitoring

Type of Incident	Number of Incidents			Number dead			Number injured		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Illegal effluent spill (land)	6	3	6	--	--	--	--	1	--
Illegal effluent spill (river/ sea)	3	6	12	--	--	--	--	20	2
Gas leak	6	3	9	--	--	--	2	1	140
Dumping of hazardous waste	5	2	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
Illegal construction/ operations	2	3	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Industrial accidents	9	7	2	2	2	--	7	3	4
TOTAL	31	24	33	2	2	--	9	25	146

The district administration and regulatory officials, like Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board and Factories Inspectorate have failed to protect workers and residents. Violations of the law by industries have been taken very lightly, even while attempts by residents to articulate their problems or voice their protest have been dealt with an iron hand by the district administration. SPIC's waste dump behind their factory is located on the Uppanar. The dump is illegal, but the District Administration and TNPCB cannot and will not do anything to challenge this. CUSECS operates without the statutory consents under Water and Air Act, and without Coastal Regulation Zone clearance. The Administration and the TNPCB ignore these violations. Chemplast Sanmar does not have complete CRZ clearance, and an application for clearance is pending with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, but construction is going apace.

The responses of the TNPCB expose the lack of scientific temperament among its staff. For instance, following the July incident where SPIC discharge massive quantities of toxic effluents into a stream leading to the Uppanar, the TNPCB responded to people's complaints by ordering SPIC to desilt the stream. SPIC deployed about ten contract workers to remove the sludge. The workers had no protective clothing, and were naked except for the lungi they wore. TNPCB was not onsite to supervise the operation.

Incident monitoring and reporting has now been reduced to a ritual. In a tiring pattern, villagers report the same incidents that they did more than a decade ago and from the same industries, and the authorities dole out the same responses they did. For instance, in the last year, there have been 6 incidents of illegal effluent discharge on land; out of this, 4 have been from CUSECS pump II. Out of the 9 gas leaks reported,

5 are from SPIC.

Table B: Repeat Offenders and their offences (Same complaints received more than once)

S No	Name of the Unit	Type of Violations	Number of times the violation reported in 2007
1.	SPIC	Gas Leaks	5
2.	CUSECS II	Effluent discharge or spill (land)	4
3.	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	Industrial Accident	2
4.	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	2
5.	Asian Paints	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	2

Similarly the role of Factories Inspectorate in monitoring industries and their work practice has been negligent. In 2007, at least 4 workers were injured in separate incidents of accidents at Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals. So far the community is not aware of any action taken on this unit or any legal compensation paid to the injured workers. Despite claims that the rule of law exists, compensation is doled out through *katta panchayats*, thereby subverting any possibility of corrective action under Factories or other safety laws.

The data also reveals a stark increase in incidents of illegal effluent discharge into the Uppanar and smoke and gaseous emissions into the air by all the industries. SACEM monitors on two occasion took samples of the river water when they suspected pollution and handed over to the TNPCB officials for analysis. They are yet to hear from the officials on the results and the findings of the sample. SACEM also took three air samples during this period and found 16 Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs), out of which 4 chemicals are known human or animal carcinogens, and 11 out of the 16 chemicals were above the safe levels of US EPA or any other regulatory standards. No action has been initiated on these reports. VOC monitoring in the SIPCOT by the TNPCB remains a distant dream.

Incidents compiled from January to December 2007

S. No	Date	Type of incident	Name of unit responsible for incident	Number of people injured	Number of people/ animals dead	Action taken by the TNPCB, Inspector of Factories and/or district administration
1.	19 January 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	All Industries	None	None, dead fish found	No action known to be taken by TNPCB or the Fisheries Department.
2.	20 January 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (land)	CUSECS II	None	None	According to a letter of TNPCB dated 16.02.2007, the board informed that it has instructed the CUSECS to not to repeat such activities in future. However no action taken by TNPCB on CUSECS for this illegality; Pipeline repaired by Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals
3.	12 February 2007	Gas Leak	SPIC	20 children	None	According to a letter-dated 19.2.2007, the TNPCB describes the drying and removal of mycelia sludge as the cause of the odour. However there was no action taken on the unit for the release by TNPCB; District Collector; education department
4.	12 February 2007	Gas Leak	SPIC	50 commuters	None	According to a letter-dated 19.2.2007, the TNPCB describes the drying and removal of mycelia sludge as the cause of the odour. However there was no action taken on the unit for the release by TNPCB; District Collector.
5.	13 February 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	All Industries	None	None	No action known to be taken by TNPCB, no information shared despite repeated requests
6.	14 February 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	All Industries	None	None	No action known to be taken by TNPCB, no information shared despite repeated requests

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7.	15 February 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	All Industries	None	None	No action known to be taken by TNPCB, no information shared despite repeated requests
8.	26 February 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	None	None	TNPCB did not reply to any of the request. However the SACEM monitors came to know that TNPCB had closed the suspected effluent discharge outlet of Pioneer. No action taken on the unit by TNPCB.
9.	14 March 2007	Illegal dumping of Hazardous Waste	Victory Chemicals	None	None	TNPCB directed the unit to convert it's hazardous waste into bricks. This order was partially complied with and then SACEM found pieces of bricks dumped outside the factory. TNPCB ordered the unit to clear the waste from outside but no action known to have taken on the unit for illegally dumping its waste.
10.	14 March 2007	Illegal dumping of Hazardous Waste	SPIC	None	None	A sample taken by TNPCB and SACEM during the routine joint river monitoring; Results of the sample not shared despite repeated requests; no action known to be taken.
11.	23 March 2007	Industrial Accident	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	3 workers	None	No action known to be taken by the Factories Inspectorate; police
12.	29 March 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (land)	CUSECS II	None	None	TNPCB officials conducted a site visit and had the place cleaned up along with the CUSECS officials. No action taken on the CUSECS for these repeated spills and leaks.
13.	30 March 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	All Industries	2 fishermen	None	SACEM took a sample of the river water and gave it to TNPCB for analysis.

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						According to TNPCB letter dated 23.04.2007 the sample was not industrial effluent but just foam and water.
14.	17 April 2007	Reclamation of river land	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	None	None	Activity stopped after the matter was reported to the District Collector.
15.	28 April 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (Land)	Highways Department (CUSECS II)	None	None	TNPCB visited the spot; their request to industries to regulate the effluent discharge ignored. No action taken on the Highways Department.
16.	8 May 2007	Industrial Accident	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	One (worker)	None	No action known to be taken by the Police, Factories Inspectorate and the District Collector.
17.	9 May 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (land)	CUSECS II	None	None	TNPCB visited the site and issued orders to industries to regulate the effluent discharge; no action taken on CUSECS for repeated spills and leaks
18.	15 May 2006	Discovery of illegal pipeline	SIPCOT Area	None	None	Matter reported to TNPCB, the officials described this pipe as a rain water pipeline. SACEM monitors informed the TNPCB about the illegal discharges from the pipeline upon which the TNPCB blocked the pipe.
19.	17 May 2007	Reclamation of river land	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	None	None	Matter was reported to the District Collector and the TNPCB. TNPCB described it as a permissible work of the unit without providing documents supporting this claim.
20.	7 June 2007	Illegal storage of Hazardous Waste in Kudikadu	Bayer Sanmar	None	None	TNPCB conducted site visit and declared the waste non hazardous without conducting any scientific tests or analysis.

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						TNPCB also gave instructions to remove the waste from the spot.
21.	1 July 2007	Gas Leak	All Industries	None	None	TNPCB conducted pollution patrol with villagers a day after receiving the complaints.
22.	2 July 2007	Gas Leak	All Industries	None	None	TNPCB conducted joint pollution patrol and accepted that the odour levels were exceptionally high and assured of action. No action known to have been taken so far. No data on VOC monitoring by SIPCOT units provided by TNPCB despite repeated requests.
23.	10 July 2007	Effluent Discharge or spill (Canal)	SPIC	None	None; 4 Chicken and 1 Goat Dead	TNPCB directed the unit to collect the effluents and store in a tanker within the premises. Directions not followed, TNPCB did not take any action on the unit for violating the directions or for illegal discharge of the effluents.
24.	11 July 2007	Effluent Discharge or spill (Canal)	SPIC	None	None	No action taken on the unit. No report given to the general public.
25.	12 July 2007	Gas Leak	SPIC	Eachangadu villagers reported effects, school closed due to the odour as many children reported symptoms of nausea	None	The TNPCB visited the spot and informed the villagers that the odour will continue for the next few days as SPIC was removing its mycelia waste. No action known to be taken on the unit for release of the chemicals in the air. No information shared with people despite repeated requests.
26.	31 July 2007	Effluent discharge or	CUSECS II	None	None	CUSECS officials repaired the pipeline

S. No	Date	Type of incident	Name of unit responsible for incident	Number of people injured	Number of people/ animals dead	Action taken by the TNPCB, Inspector of Factories and/or district administration
		spill (land)				after three hours of the leak, no action known to be taken by TNPCB on CUSECS.
27.	11 August 2007	Gas Leak	All Industries	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
28.	13 August 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	All Industries	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
29.	11 October 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	Pioneer Miyagi Chemicals	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
30.	14 October 2007	Gas Leak	Shasun Chemicals	70 people	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken. District Collector and TNPCB took samples of water from Shasun Chemicals, no reports shared with public. Dismissed as viral fever. No study conducted to confirm or negate
31.	31 October 2007	Gas Leak	SPIC	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
32.	1 November 2007	Gas Leak	SPIC	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
33.	9 November 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (river)	Asian Paints	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
34.	15 November 2007	Illegal Construction	Narmada Chemicals	None	None	TNPCB stopped construction after receiving a complaint.
35.	25 December 2007	Effluent discharge or spill (land)	Pondicherry Alum	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the complaint, no action known to be taken.
36.	26 December 2007	Effluent discharge or	Asian Paints	None	None	No response from TNPCB on the

S. No	Date	Type of incident	Name of unit responsible for incident	Number of people injured	Number of people/ animals dead	Action taken by the TNPCB, Inspector of Factories and/or district administration
		spill (river)				complaint, no action known to be taken.

