



Fire Safety

Fire incident at a coaching centre in Surat has resulted in the death of 22 students.

Facts

- As per **National Crime Records Bureau** figures, **17,700 Indians died - 48 people** every day - due to fire accidents in 2015. Of those who died, **62% were women**.
- **Maharashtra and Gujarat**, the two most highly urbanised states, account for about **30% of the country's fire accident deaths**, hence there is a **direct correlation between the deaths due to fire-related accidents and population density associated with urbanisation**.
- According to **India Risk Surveys 2018**, outbreak of fire poses risks to business continuity and operations and **ranks India at 3rd position in fire incidents**, especially in Northern and Western regions of India.

Causes of Fire Accidents in India

- **Violation of safety norms and lack of standardisation and regulation** is a major cause of fire accidents, as large scale construction of false roofs in commercial buildings and multiplexes is against the national building construction code.
- **High rise buildings are more prone to fire accidents** as they lack adequate in-built fire protection systems that makes salvaging operations difficult.
- **Poorly stored goods**, even though they are not flammable, helps to spread fire and hinder fire fighters gain access to the seat of the fire or **reduce the effectiveness of sprinkler systems**.
- **Unclear provisions of fire safety audit** in terms of scope, objective, methodology and periodicity of a fire safety audit.

Fire Safety Audit aims at assessing fire safety standards of an organisation, occupancy or building for compliance with the **National Building Code of India**, relevant Indian standards and the legislations enacted by state governments and local bodies, on fire prevention, fire protection and life safety measures.

- **Lack of adequate resources, preparedness and poor fire services** fail to ensure fire safety cover to the population.
 - Based on a **2011 study, 65 percent deficiency was reported in fire stations**.
 - According to Ministry of Home Affairs, in 144 towns with population over 1 lakh, there is a **huge deficiency of fire fighting infrastructure**.
 - **78 percent of the budget allocated** to buying fire safety equipment and rescue vehicles went **unused across the state between 2010 and 2015**.

Fire service is a **state subject** and has been included **as municipal function in the XII schedule of the Constitution**. The **municipal corporations and local bodies** are responsible for providing fire services in many states.

- **Lack of awareness about the safety arrangements** before purchasing or hiring a flat in an apartment or before starting an institution.

- **Faulty Wiring:** PUF (polyurethane foam) used for plastic insulation carries a **high risk of accidental fire** as most of the times it is exposed to electrical wiring which on becoming heated due to overloading or short circuit catches fire immediately.

Preventive Measures

- **Modernisation of Fire safety equipment:** the government should provide financial support and assistance in augmenting and modernising the fire departments
- **Proper designing of electrical fittings** and regular maintenance of wiring (at least once in a year).
- **Building awareness** among citizens about fire prevention and protection measures by organising fire fighting workshop once in six months in localities/mohallas/schools with the involvement of local councillors/elected representatives.
- **Fire service departments should audit critical fire prone installations** (like high rise buildings, multiplexes in congested areas) periodically (once in six months) and take appropriate actions against erring establishments.
- **Proper demarcation of entry and exit points** in crowded buildings, **installation of fire fighting equipment** and their regular maintenance, periodic renewal of **No-objection certificates** by building owners in order to ensure fire preparedness.

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