



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR MECHANIZED DESLUDGING OF SEPTIC TANKS IN TAMIL NADU -

Part II - Service Seeker

As on 25th January, 2024

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1. Introduction

For improved sanitation services in urban areas, faecal sludge management is very essential and needs to be managed safely. In Tamil Nadu (TN), nearly 70% of households are dependent on onsite sanitation system (OSS). In the OSS system, the sludge is collected in a septic tank or in a pit. Over time, the sludge needs to be emptied from the tank to avoid overflow, blockages and backflow of the sludge into the toilets. This service should be provided by licensed desludging operators (DSO) in adherence with the Septage Management Regulations and Operative Guidelines, 2023.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is dedicated towards providing improved and safe sanitation services. In adherence with the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSR Act) and the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Rules, 2022, the Municipal Administration & Water Supply Department issued the Septage Management Regulations and Operative Guidelines, 2023. The guideline mandates ULBs to ensure that desludging services are provided by licensed desludging operators (DSOs) only.

Due to lack of knowledge/ awareness on safe desludging options, many households rely on unregulated service providers and informal workers to clean the septic tanks through manual entry. This is in contravention of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSR Act) and is also illegal. As untrained sanitation workers may not follow proper procedures or use protective equipment, they face significant health and safety hazards.

Manual scavenging is a highly exploitative and inhumane practice that violates basic human rights, so **all desludging activities should only be done mechanically.**

2. Statutory Provisions

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (hereafter referred to as PEMSAR Act) was enacted for the prohibition of employment as manual scavengers, rehabilitation of manual scavengers and their families and the act provides various statutory provisions to address the issue and enforce penalties for violations.

Under section 7¹ of the PEMSAR Act, it is explicitly stated that no person, local authority or any agency shall engage or employ either directly or indirectly any person for hazardous cleaning of a sewer or a septic tank. Section 9² of the PEMSAR Act deals with the punishments for contraventions of the provisions of Section 7.

¹Section 7 (PEMSAR Act, 2013) – No person, local authority or any agency shall engage or employ, either directly or indirectly, any person for hazardous cleaning of sewer or a septic tank. “Hazardous Cleaning” is the manual cleaning of a sewer or a septic tank without the protective gear, cleaning equipment, and observance of safety precautions prescribed under the Rules.

²Section 9 (PEMSAR Act, 2013) – Whoever contravenes the provisions of Section 7 shall for the first contravention be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to two lakh rupees or with both, and for any subsequent contravention with imprisonment which may extend to five years or with fine which may extend to five lakhs rupees, or with both.

Furthermore, if a person engaged in manual scavenging belongs to the Scheduled Castes (SC) or Scheduled Tribes (ST), the provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 also apply.

In cases where a worker is forced into manual entry into a septic tank and an accident result in the worker's death, the applicable provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) come into effect. The specific provisions of the IPC would be invoked to address such incidents and hold the responsible parties accountable.

3. Compensation to be given in the event of casualty

No manual entry is permitted into the septic tank. In case a worker dies while cleaning a septic tank/ sewer, as per G.O. (Ms) No. 83, MA&WS (MA2) Dept., Dt: 07.06.2022, a compensation of Rs.15 lakhs shall be paid as per the stipulations contained in the G.O.

4. Who is Service Seeker?

Service seeker means an individual consumer or institution seeking sanitation services from urban local body or private company/operator to undertake a sanitation work including cleaning/maintenance of community/institutional/public toilets, septic tank, STP/FSTP, sewer and open drainage system etc.

5. Scope of the Document

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is a step-by-step guide for service seeker to seek cleaning and maintenance services for septic tank. This document covers all the necessary instructions and procedures to be followed by the sanitation service seeker.

6. Guidelines for the General Public and Private Establishments

Service seekers may seek desludging service by calling through Toll Free No. “14420”/ App and register for the following services namely:

- Desludging of septic tank.
- Incident reporting of un-safe cleaning of sewer/septic tank practice.
- Grievance redressal.

6.1. Desludging of Septic Tank

- Provide the name, address and contact number to the telephone operator along with details of the approximate size of the septic tank, access to the property (Road width – Narrow/wide), etc.
- Safely keep the booking ID / PIN number provided by telephone operator.

Registration of request/complaint

Dear Customer, Your service request/complaint has been registered with the booking ID:XXXXX. Your request is assigned to (DSO NAME, Vehicle No. & Contact No.). Your PIN number for this service request is XXXXXXXX. Please share this PIN with DSO after completion of the work and make the payment).

- Show the location of the septic tank to the worker.
- Allow the worker to access an electric point to use their equipment.
- Do not allow the manual entry into septic tank/pit.
- Ensure the lid of the septic tank is sealed properly by the worker after desludging.
- After completion, pay the desludging fees and collect the receipt.
- Provide the PIN number to the worker upon completion.
- Sign the undertaking form and hand over to the DSO.(Annexure I)

6.2. Incident reporting of unsafe cleaning of sewer / septic tank practice

- Provide the name and contact number of the complainant to the telephone operator.
- Location and Date of the incident.
- Photo or any proof could be shared if possible.
- Safely keep the booking ID /Complaint number.

6.3. Grievance Redressal

- Sewerage related complaints such as overflowing maintenance hole or missing/damaged maintenance hole cover.
 - Provide the name and contact number of the complainant to the telephone operator.

- Location of the maintenance hole with nearest landmark.
- Safely keep the booking ID /Complaint number.
- Unsatisfactory desludging service provided by the operator which may include the following reasons, namely:
 - After desludging, the lid is not closed properly.
 - If there is any spillage.
 - The work site is left unhygienic without proper cleaning of the spillage using the proper absorbent materials. (Eg. The top of the cover and the area around the septic tank is not sprayed with chlorine solution).
 - Any other reason which you would like to report to Toll Free No. 14420.

7. Nudge and Feedback messages

The service seeker will receive the nudge messages through App/ SMS/ WhatsApp (illustrations as shown in Annexure II)/telephone operator as mentioned below.

Nudge Message

1. Do not allow the worker/s to enter the septic tank. In case the worker insists or enters the septic tank, please call Toll Free No. 14420 immediately and report the incident.
2. In case of any emergency or accident during desludging please call an Ambulance service (108), Fire & Rescue Department, Police Department, Toll Free No. 14420/ Duty supervisor immediately.
3. In case your septic tank does not have an openable lid, the workers will break through the cover. It will be your responsibility to seal it completely.
4. please check if the worker is wearing body protective coverall (uniform),mask, safety glass, safety helmet, nitrile gloves and gum boots.
5. Please provide the worker with access to an electric point to connect their equipment.
6. Do not go near or allow anyone other than the worker/s near the desludging site.
7. Do not light fire/flame near the site during desludging.
8. Please offer the workers drinking water, and soap & water to wash themselves, in case required.
9. After completion, please read and sign the undertaking form presented to you by the workers.

The service seeker will receive feedback message as mentioned below.

Feedback message

Are you satisfied with the work done? (Yes/No), If no then call Toll Free No. 14420

Annexure I

Undertaking to be signed by the service seeker, after the DSO completes the service request.

படிவம் III நகராட்சி நிர்வாகம் மற்றும் குடிநீர் வழங்கல் துறை

வீட்டு உரிமையாளர் உறுதிமொழிப் படிவம்

நாள்

1. நாள் _____ வயது _____ த/பெ. _____
_____ என்ற முகவரியில் வசிக்கிறேன். மனிதக் கழிவுகளை அகற்றும் தொழில் புரிவோர் தடுப்பு மற்றும் அவர்களது மறுவாழ்வு சட்டம் 2013-ன் கீழ் பிரிவு 7-ன் படி தூய்மைப் பணியாளர்கள் கழிவுநீர்த் தொட்டியை சுத்தம் செய்ய தொட்டியினுள் இறங்குவது தடை செய்யப்பட்டுள்ளது என்பதை அறிந்திருக்கிறேன்.
2. அவ்வாறு ஈடுபடுத்தினால் மேற்படி சட்டத்தின் பிரிவு 9-ன் படி முதன் முறையாக மீறுபவர்களுக்கு 2 ஆண்டுகள் சிறைத்தண்டனை அல்லது 2 லட்சம் ரூபாய் அபராதம் அல்லது இரண்டும் சேர்த்தோ தண்டனையாக விதிக்கப்படும். இரண்டாவது முறையாக மீறுபவர்களுக்கு 5 ஆண்டுகள் சிறைத்தண்டனை அல்லது 5 லட்சம் ரூபாய் அபராதம் அல்லது இரண்டும் சேர்த்தோ விதிக்கப்படும் என்பதை நான் நன்கு அறிவேன். இது தொடர்பாக நகராட்சி நிர்வாகம் மற்றும் குடிநீர் வழங்கல் துறையினால் வெளியிடப்பட்டுள்ள அரசாணை நிலை எண். 110, நாள் 12.08.2022-ன் படி, தமிழ்நாடு மனிதக் கழிவுகளை அகற்றும் தொழில் புரிவோர் தடுப்பு மற்றும் அவர்களது மறுவாழ்வு விதிகள் 2022-ன் அறிவிப்புகள், அறிவுறுத்தல்கள் ஆகியவற்றினையும் நான் நன்கு அறிவேன்.
3. கழிவுநீர் கட்டமைப்பு மற்றும் கழிவுநீர் சேகரிப்பு தொட்டியை சுத்தம் செய்யும் போது விபத்து/உயிரிழப்பு ஏற்பட்டால் இப்பணியில் ஈடுபடுத்திய உரிமையாளர்/ ஒப்பந்ததாரர் / பணி அமர்த்தியவருக்கு இந்திய தண்டனை சட்டத்தின் படியும் , மனிதக் கழிவுகளை அகற்றும் தொழில் புரிவோர் தடுப்பு மற்றும் அவர்களது மறுவாழ்வு சட்டம் 2013-ல் பிரிவு 7-ன் மற்றும் 9-ன் படியும் மற்றும் நடைமுறையில் உள்ள இதர சட்டங்களின் படியும், குற்றச்சாட்டு பதிவு செய்யப்பட்டு குற்றவியல் நடவடிக்கை எடுக்கப்படும். மேலும், அரசாணை (நிலை) எண். 83 நாள் 07.06.2022 நகராட்சி நிர்வாகம் மற்றும் குடிநீர் வழங்கல் துறையின் படி ரூ. 15 இலட்சம் இழப்பீடாக இறந்த பணியாளரின் வாரிசுதாரருக்கு வழங்கப்பட வேண்டும் என்பதை நான் நன்கு அறிவேன்.
4. கட்டணமில்லா தொலைப்பேசி எண். 14420/ இதற்கென பிரத்யேகமாக உருவாக்கப்பட்ட செயலி மூலம் தொடர்பு கொண்டு உரிமம் பெற்ற கழிவுநீர் லாரி மூலம் மட்டுமே கழிவு நீர் அகற்றும் சேவையினை பெறுவேன்.
5. இயந்திரம் மூலம் கழிவு நீர் அகற்றும்பொழுது தூய்மை பணியாளர்கள் முறையான பாதுகாப்பு உபகரணங்களை அணிந்து பணியாற்றுவதை உறுதி செய்வேன்.
6. எனவே நான் எந்தவொரு நபரையும் கழிவுநீர் தொட்டியில் இறங்குவதற்கு அனுமதிக்க மாட்டேன் என்று இதன் மூலம் உறுதியளிக்கிறேன்.

நாள்:

பெயர்

கையொப்பம்

Annexure II

Nudge Message sent through WhatsApp (Illustration)

Responsibility as Service Seeker

Call on **14420** to report illegal & unsafe septic tank/sewer cleaning activity

Please offer the workers drinking water, and soap & water to wash themselves, incase required.

Call on **108, 14420**/ Duty supervisor, Fire & Rescue Department, Police Department, immediately In case of any emergency or accident during desludging

Please provide the worker access to an electric point to connect their equipment

If septic tank does not have an openable lid, the workers will break through the cover. It will be your responsibility to seal it completely

After completion, please read and sign the undertaking form presented to you by the workers.

Do not go near or allow anyone other than the worker/s near the desludging site.

Do not light fire/flame near the site during desludging.



Check if the worker is wearing uniform, mask, glasses, helmet, gloves and boots.

No Manual Entry into the Septic Tank is permitted.

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