

DENR delivers major feat in solid waste management implementation with closure of dumpsites in 2021



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu is seeing the beginning of a new era of environmental consciousness among Filipinos with the closure of all dumpsites in the country this year, through the effective implementation of Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

"This accomplishment mirrors the successful implementation of our Solid Waste Management Program, one of DENR's 10 priority programs for intensified environmental protection. It signifies that we are headed in the direction of behavior change," Cimatu said on the closure of 335 open dumpsites in 2021.

Since 2017, the closure of dumpsites has been part of Cimatu's commitment to the country's solid waste management program.

It is also a testament to the political will of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and his administration since it is only now, 20 years after the enactment of RA 9003 in 2001, that the closure has been fully accomplished.

The DENR chief believes that the achievement will spur the Filipinos' behavioral change towards proper solid waste management.

Aside from this, DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda, who serves an alternate chair to the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC), said that the Commission has also passed Resolution No. 1428 series of 2021 declaring Plastic Straw and Plastic Coffee Stirrer as Non-Environmentally Acceptable Products or NEAP.

"Matagal na pong isinaad sa batas ng RA 9003 ang tungkol sa NEAP. Mabuti na lang po at nailabas natin ang resolution kaugnay rito," Antiporda said.

NSWMC also passed Resolution No. 1429 series of 2021 enjoining all National Government Agencies to Provide Yellow Bins in their Respective Premises for the Proper Storage of Household Healthcare Waste and To Coordinate with Their Respective Local Government Units for The Collection, Transport, Treatment, and Disposal of Such Wastes.

"This year, it becomes more challenging to implement the said law because sanitary landfills, materials recovery facilities, and transfer stations all became critical. Packaging materials such as plastic wrappers to ensure the safety and protection of some products, and healthcare wastes from medical facilities, have been piling up in these facilities," he added.

With this, Antiporda lauded the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) "for their untiring efforts to pass these two resolutions."

Meanwhile, other notable achievements of the DENR—through EMB—this year include the issuance of three policies for air quality management namely, the Adoption of the Manual on Data Handling Protocols for Criteria Air Pollutants; Adoption of the Manual for Siting and Design of Philippine Air Quality Monitoring Stations; and Adoption of Interim Protocols in the Conduct of Remote Site Activities in the Implementation of All Laws under the Mandate of the EMB during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Adoption of the Manual on Data Handling Protocols for Criteria Air Pollutants provides a uniform procedure in data handling of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring for the Regional Offices in evaluating the concentration of Criteria Air Pollutants measured from the Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS) supervised by EMB.

The Adoption of the Manual for Siting and Design of Philippine Air Quality Monitoring Stations, on the other hand, aims to guide the EMB's regional offices in selecting the appropriate sites for their respective AQMS, including technical specifications.

Lastly, the Adoption of Interim Protocols in the Conduct of Remote Site Activities in the Implementation of All Laws under the Mandate of the EMB during the COVID-19 Pandemic adopts the use of remote technologies during field monitoring which may not be physically possible during the lockdowns.

It covers conducting site activities in firms, establishments, institutions, undertakings, projects, and businesses with registrations or permits within the EMB mandate.

According to DENR-EMB Director William Cuñado, they were also able to "contribute its fair share of lessening the transmission of the COVID-19 virus through the issuance of related policies."

"We have made waste disposal more strategic with the amendment of Department Administrative Order (DAO) 2021-2014 on the use of alternative fuels and raw materials in cement kilns. Operators of Treatment, Storage and Disposal facilities now are required to process and disinfect infectious waste for these to qualify as raw materials for co-processing in cement kilns," Cuñado said.

The order amends DAO 2010-06 or the Guidelines on the Use of Alternative Fuels and Raw Materials in Cement Kilns.

He added that the guidelines have specified means to make co-processing more efficient with tons of waste produced during the pandemic. It also includes provisions on waste materials to be used as raw materials in alternative fuels.

Cement kilns are used for the production of several types of hydraulic cement alongside traditional materials such as limestone, clay and others.

Cuñado said the issuance of the amendment sends a stringent message to cement kiln manufacturers to "not accept unsegregated, unprocessed and untreated waste so that the infectious waste will not contaminate other materials and prevent the virus from spreading further." ###