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Time running out for civic agencies to clear death traps

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New Delhi: With days left for the monsoon to reach Delhi and dengue already gaining a foothold, civic agencies have failed miserably in handling the hundreds of tonnes of construction and demolition (C&D) waste being dumped across the city.

The government does not have sufficient infrastructure to process C&D waste and it should be ideally disposed of at landfill sites. However, truckloads of waste are being discarded along roads, in parks, etc, posing not just a health hazard but also making it dangerous for motorists. Agencies seem uninterested in ensuring its removal from public areas or penalising those dumping waste.

After a National Green Tribunal order prohibiting dumping of debris on the Yamuna riverbed, contractors have found new avenues to discard this waste. With more than 7,000 tonnes of C&D waste being generated in Delhi per day, and treatment facilities available for only 2,500 tonnes per day (tpd), people find it easiest to throw the waste along roads. A mountain of debris can be seen spilling onto the road while descending from the Barapullah elevated road towards Sarai Kale Khan. In east Delhi, the situation is the same near Karkardooma crossing while going towards Anand Vihar where a 100m stretch is piled with debris.

The green belt developed in the centre of the Geeta Colony cloverleaf has been destroyed as people have broken through the gates to dispose C&D waste. The public works department (PWD) will be constructing four plants in the city to convert C&D waste into tiles, which government agencies are mandated to use in construction work. PWD minister Satyendar Jain said that tenders for these plants have been floated and their capacity will be four times the amount of C&D waste generated by the agency. Currently, there are two plants in Delhi processing such waste. The one at Burari, a 2,000 tpd plant, has been made in collaboration between IL&FS and the municipal corporation.

The other is a 500 tpd plant at Shastri Park. The tiles and bricks being produced here are being used by the corporation. PWD officials said they have to pay municipal corporations to dump waste at landfill sites. They allege the corporations dump C&D waste onto PWD roads and then charge the agency for dumping it into landfills. However, while trading charges the agencies have been ignoring C&D waste being generated by private contractors. "It is impossible to keep track of who is dumping waste because it is done at night," said an official.