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▶ Hospitals & Clinics

STEPS develops new technology to handle hospital wastes at affordable cost

Monday, February 04, 2008 08:00 IST

Arya Anil, Mumbai

A new technology that would help the hospitals in the country to manage bio medical and other wastes effectively by themselves will be introduced in the market soon. Christened as Polycrack, this new technology has the capability to convert all types of inorganic wastes, especially biomedical waste into oil and gas.

Hospitals have been complaining for long about the excessive charges imposed by municipal corporations of several regions in disposing and treatment of infectious or hazardous wastes.

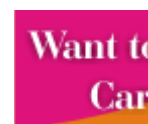
Developed by T. Raghavendra Rao, director, Sustainable Technologies and Environmental Projects (STEPS), Polycrack Technology would help the hospital authorities to dispose hazardous wastes at low cost and in an effective manner.

"Hospitals can adopt the system on their own as it is easy to operate and does not require expensive technicians. It operates at a lower temperature range and in a closed loop system so that the emission parameters are met easily. Besides, low capital and operating costs and added benefit of in-house fuel production are expected to attract the hospitals to try this technology for good," said, Raghavendra Rao.

Most of the waste generated in the hospitals consist of plastics (mostly PVC), body fluids, blood, organ parts etc. As per the procedures, the waste

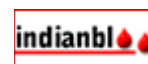


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Dr. Pundi Narasimhan Rangarajan, associate professor, Department of Biochemistry, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore

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has to be segregated and packed in distinctly marked plastic bags for disposal. However, the new technology is expected to do away with this intricate process.

Referring to the modus operandi of Polycrack, Rao, said, "The mixed waste from hospitals can be fed into the system, which then converts plastics to liquid fuels and organic matter to gaseous fuels". The gaseous fuels thus produced can be utilised to generate electricity to run some of the hospital utilities as well as the plant itself. The liquid fuels can be used to run the stand-by generators, the hospitals normally have.

"Using the incinerators at the hospital premises is expensive, hazardous and requires consistent monitoring by trained technicians. The incinerators consume high volume of liquid fuels and considering all expenses of maintenance, employee costs and fuel, the incinerators become a liability rather than an asset to the hospitals. So, many hospitals in the country reportedly prefer a cheaper way of disposal," Rao noted.

The technology can be used on a commercial scale now. "We are currently working on 25 TPD (ton per day) plants for general use. For hospitals we have to develop smaller units. Hospital use also requires clearances from pollution control boards. We are already working on this angle. The smaller units for hospital use may be launched after extensive testing and after obtaining approvals from statutory bodies. We estimate that such units will be available for hospitals in about 4 to 5 months time," he said.

Asked whether Maharashtra Pollution Control Board would welcome Polycrack for waste management in hospitals, Sanjay Khandare, member secretary, MPCB, said, "First of all we have to check out whether the new system works efficiently and would not produce any toxic or

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hazardous substances while converting waste materials into gas or fuels. We should also find out whether the system is environment friendly or not. If it is found efficient, we will take necessary steps to implement the technology".

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