

## SURVEY FINDS 10% STAFF REPORTED SICK IN ONE WEEK

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Poor air quality in Delhi-NCR forced about 10% employees to take leave from work due to respiratory problems, according to a survey by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham).

The survey is based on responses from human resource professionals in about 150 companies, during the course of one week, to evaluate the impact of air pollution on companies' financial health in India.

These companies include public and private sector industries in and around Delhi-NCR.

The survey shows that companies are facing staff crunch due to employees calling in sick.

"Persistent cough, burning eyes, itchy throat and respiratory and lung-related problems such as asthma and bronchitis are the main reasons because of which many employees are not turning up for work, said many of the human resource representatives."

"Air pollution in Delhi-NCR is not just devastating the environment but harmful amount of gases, dust, fumes and odour are causing breathing problems among people," said DS Rawat, secretary general of Assocham.

According to studies, the most harmful for sedentary office workers is particulate matter, which can seep in buildings through windows and vents thereby entering the blood stream and central nervous system, affecting concentration and mental performance, the survey report said.

## Smog affects people's efficiency in NCR too

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Gurgaon/New Delhi, 7 November

Smoggy atmosphere prevailing across Delhi-NCR has started taking a toll on people's health and is hampering their ability to do jobs efficiently, according to a just-concluded survey by ASSOCHAM.

The Social Development arm of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) interacted with human resource professionals in about 150 companies working in different industries both in public and private sectors in Delhi, Gurgaon and Noida to evaluate impact of air pollution on companies' financial health.

The survey was conducted during the course of past one week.

Most of the HR professionals said they are facing staff crunch ranging between 5-10 per cent with growing number of employees calling in sick.

Persistent cough, burning eyes, itchy throat and respiratory/lung-related problems like asthma and bronchitis are the main reasons as to why many employees are not turning up for work, said HR representatives.

Though many HR professionals said they have installed air purifiers across their office and have advised their staff to use face mask but the severity of air pollution has certainly impaired performance through changes in respiratory, cardiovascular, and cognitive function.

Though many private

companies are allowing their employees to work from home while recuperating from their illness, the survey noted.

As per studies, the most harmful for sedentary office workers is particulate matter, which can seep in buildings through windows and vents thereby entering the blood stream and central nervous system, affecting concentration and mental performance.

"Air pollution in Delhi-NCR is not just devastating the environment but harmful amount of gases, dust, fumes and odour are causing breathing problems to people," said D S Rawat, secretary general of ASSOCHAM while releasing the chamber's survey.

"Companies should offer employees flexible working hours to cope with this problem," said Mr Rawat.

"Environment and air pollution related issues might hurt brand India and hit sectors like tourism, outdoor recreation as people tend to stay away from polluted areas so as not to breathe in dense and toxic air," he said.

"Sick days together with visits to hospital might impact middle class people the most as high levels of pollution are linked to serious chronic illnesses, like heart disease and lung cancer, which are costly to treat," added Mr Rawat. "Sunshine and good air have become luxury for Delhiites who have been dealing with anxieties over pollution, traffic, living costs, property values and the general stress," he said further.

## Companies face staff crunch as pollution hits employees' health

**NEW DELHI, PTI:** In the backdrop of alarming pollution levels choking Delhi-NCR, a growing number of employees have been calling in sick, leading to a 5-10 per cent staff crunch across firms operating in the region, according to a report.

A survey conducted by Assocham over the last one week revealed that the persistent smog across Delhi-NCR has started taking a toll on employees' health and is hampering their ability to do their duties efficiently.

Moreover, it warned that the phenomenon is likely to hurt Brand India and impact the country's tourism.

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tion related issues might hurt Brand India and hit sectors like tourism and outdoor recreation as people tend to stay away from polluted areas," Assocham Secretary General D S Rawat said.

The social development arm of the industry chamber interacted with human resource professionals in about 150 companies operating in and around Delhi to evaluate the impact of air pollution.

Most of the HR professionals said that they are facing a staff crunch ranging between 5 and 10 per cent with a growing number of employees calling in sick.

Persistent cough, burning eyes, itchy throat and respira-

tory/lung-related problems like asthma and bronchitis are the main reasons as to why many employees are not turning up for work, said several HR representatives.

Many private firms are also allowing their employees to work from home while recuperating from their illness, the survey noted. It said particulate matter, which can seep into buildings through windows and vents, is the most harmful for office workers as it can enter the blood stream and central nervous system, affecting concentration and mental performance. Rawat said that companies should offer employees flexible working hours to cope with the problem.

## Cos face staff crunch as pollution takes its toll

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Companies operating in the Delhi and NCR region are facing staff crunch ranging between 5-10 per cent with growing number of employees calling in sick due to smoggy atmosphere.

A survey conducted by industry chamber Assocham over the last one week revealed that the persistent smog across Delhi-NCR has started taking a toll on employees' health and is hampering their ability to do their duties efficiently.

Moreover, it warned that the phenomenon is likely to hurt Brand India and impact the country's tourism.

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# Pollution costing India \$80b per year

**BLOOMBERG**

*New Delhi*

THE toxic smog that has enveloped New Delhi, turning it into the most polluted city on the planet, may soon take its toll on the Indian capital's economy. On Monday, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, or Assocham, released a survey suggesting five to 10 per cent of the national capital's workforce had called in sick due to respiratory problems. Public concern is at an all-time high and air purifiers and face masks are flying off shelves in the capital.

As the capital of about 17 million people remained shrouded in a thick smog, analysts said the automobile, construction and real estate sectors could be the most at risk if the government is unable to overcome a lack of political coordination and act on air pollution. Rising discontent over air pollution could result in renewed attempts at banning

diesel cars, said Mizuno's Patraik, which would hit carmakers in Asia's third-biggest auto market. Worsening pollution, he added, could also drag on an already "quiet" local real estate market.

The World Bank said in 2013 that air pollution and other environmental degradation costs India \$80 billion per year, about 5.7 per cent of the country's GDP. Assocham said air pollution is preventing workers from doing their jobs efficiently, and could impact tourism. Foreign delegates at a global health conference on tobacco control in Noida on Monday were seen wearing masks. "Pollution related issues will hurt brand India," said Assocham director general DS Rawa.

There is now unprecedented awareness about the levels of pollution in Delhi, said Barun Aggarwal, CEO of Breathe Easy Consultants, which sells air purifiers and outfits large buildings. "With Indians, it always used to be, 'we grew up with this, it's fine.' But

now, for the first time, there's panic," Aggarwal said. "People are talking about taking drastic measures, talking about leaving Delhi."

The World Bank has pegged the cost of air pollution globally at \$5.11 trillion in welfare losses, a figure that has grown as developing countries rapidly urbanise. In South Asia, air pollution costs the equivalent of 7.4 per cent of regional GDP. In India's boisterous democracy, coordinated action on complex problems such as air pollution is difficult. Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, for example, is a rival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On Monday, Environment Minister Anil Madhav Dave called for state governments to implement pollution control steps. The issue also crosses political jurisdictions, with much of the pollution coming from fires in the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana. Despite a Delhi High Court order to states to stop crop stubble burning, farmers — a key constituency in India — have continued to light fires.

