

3 years after closure order, 19 tyre units still polluting state

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

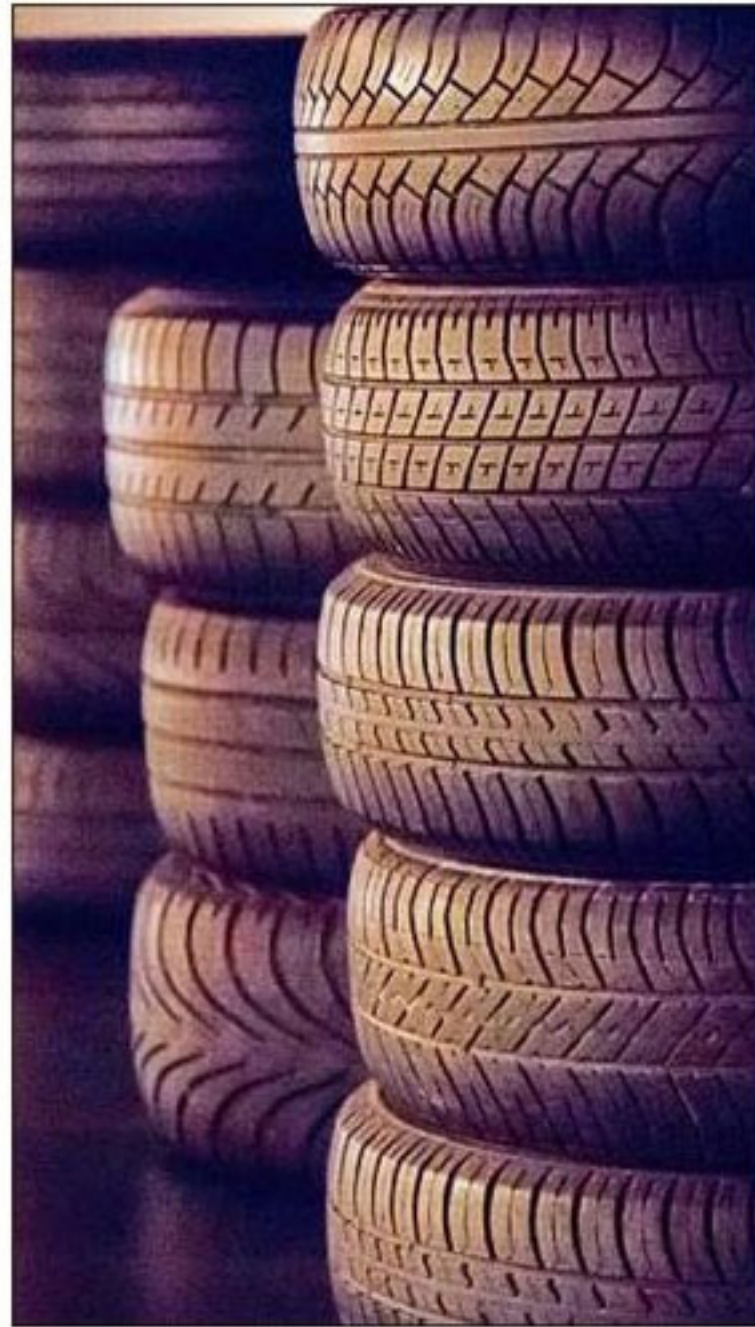
As many as 19 tyre pyrolysis units — highly polluting factories that recycle tyres — are functioning in the state in violation of rules three years after the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) ordered their closure.

The factories recycle tyres to produce tyre pyrolysis oil — which is used as fuel in cement, ceramic and other industries — pyro gas, carbon black and other materials. The use of inferior technology in making these products, which involves combustion of discarded tyres, has led to production of carcinogenic gases like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons besides toxic smoke.

In 2019, the CPCB issued closure orders to 270 pyrolysis factories in the country which failed to follow the standard operating procedure (SoP).

The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) was entrusted with the enforcement of rule in the state. However, a recent report by the board shows that 19 of the 34 centres in Karnataka are yet to comply with the order. Only 12 complied with the SoP while three shut down.

Officials in KSPCB attributed the delay in action to the



Covid-19 pandemic.

KSPCB chairman Shanth A Thimmaiah said the board has initiated strict action against polluters ever since he took over in November 2021. “We have issued closure orders to eight pyrolysis units. In Humnabad, I personally oversaw the closure of some of the units for failure to comply with environmental norms,” he said.

To a question on the delay in action, he said the KSPCB has to follow a procedure. The board has to issue a show-cause notice and provide a hearing to the industries before initiating action. “I am not aware of developments in cases prior to the time I took

over. Since last year, however, we have been cracking down on polluters. In fact, over the last few days, I issued notices to three units. They have been called for a public hearing,” he said. Asked whether the board has imposed any penalty, he said the ‘polluter pays’ principle would be invoked against those that fail to comply even after issuing notices.

“Damages will be recovered from industries which fail to comply with rules,” he said.

New rule

Thimmaiah said the board has introduced a major reform in monitoring industries, which are classified as green, orange and red based on the pollution they cause.

Till now, industries were given several years to file compliance reports. While red-category industries had five years, orange had 10 and green category had 15 years. Tyre pyrolysis units are classified as red-category industries.

“We have changed the rules now. Regardless of the category, industries have to file a half-yearly compliance report. This will be followed by random inspections to ensure that we are getting the correct information. This process is already giving results,” Thimmaiah said.