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Certified Emission Control Devices: The Key to Cleaner Air in India

The RECDs are aftermarket technologies designed to retrofit existing diesel generators, significantly slashing emissions by over 70 percent without affecting the engine's performance.

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National Green Tribunal Improving air quality Central Pollution Control Board Sustainable industrial practices Anmol Khandelwal





India's battle against air pollution is at a tipping point. With air quality among the worst globally, the need for concrete measures to combat this crisis is more pressing than ever. Among the many solutions on the table, certified Retrofit Emission Control Devices (RECDs) are emerging as a crucial tool in this fight, and their significance cannot be overstated.

Diesel engines, especially those in generators, are among the biggest culprits behind India's air pollution woes. These engines emit a dangerous mix of pollutants like particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and carbon monoxide (CO), which directly contribute to respiratory issues, heart diseases, and environmental degradation. To address this, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has mandated the use of certified RECDs, recognizing their potential in cutting harmful emissions and improving air quality.

The RECDs are aftermarket technologies designed to retrofit existing diesel generators, significantly slashing emissions by over 70 percent without affecting the engine's performance. For a country aiming to reduce PM 2.5 levels by 20-30 percent by 2024 under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), the implementation of such devices is not just desirable—it is essential. The NCAP recognizes diesel generators as a major source of urban air pollution, highlighting the critical need for RECDs as a strategic solution to mitigate hazardous emissions.

The National Green Tribunal's mandate, backed by the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) stringent guidelines, has set a high bar for emission control technology. The certification process ensures that only proven, effective devices make it to market. This distinction is critical, as it guards against subpar technologies that could undermine efforts to tackle pollution and waste valuable resources.

Expanding Usage with State-Level Oversight

To truly scale up the impact of certified RECDs, it's essential that their implementation goes beyond national directives. Establishing dedicated state-level committees to monitor and enforce RECD adoption could serve as a critical step forward. These committees should not only ensure compliance but also conduct regular audits, track the installation progress, and hold industries accountable with stringent follow-ups. A decentralized, state-specific strategy would allow for better alignment with local pollution challenges, providing targeted solutions for the most affected areas.

Such committees could also play a vital role in identifying regions with high levels of emissions from diesel generators and launching awareness drives in those hotspots. Additionally, by coordinating with municipal bodies, these committees can facilitate timely subsidies, tax incentives, or rebates for industries that proactively comply. This dual approach—compliance monitoring and incentive support—would significantly enhance the rate of RECD adoption, curbing pollution at its source.

A Certified Pathway to Progress

It's important to highlight the broader implications of certified RECDs. By aligning with government norms and meeting essential requirements to curb pollution, these devices not only address environmental concerns but also boost the domestic economy—creating a win-win situation for India.

But let's understand why the emphasis on certification? The answer is straightforward: quality and reliability. In a market flooded with quick-fix solutions and copycat devices, certification is the only shield against substandard products that might promise much but deliver little. Certified RECDs undergo rigorous testing, guaranteeing their effectiveness in reducing pollutants like PM 2.5, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons. Without this assurance, industries could find themselves adopting ineffective solutions that fail to curb emissions adequately, wasting time, money, and effort.

For the success of RECDs, wide-scale adoption is crucial, and this is where strong enforcement of regulations, industry awareness, and financial support mechanisms come into play. Industry leaders must understand that beyond regulatory compliance, investing in certified emission control devices is an investment in public health and sustainable growth. With India's rising pollution levels directly affecting millions, the stakes could not be higher.

To put it simply, adopting certified RECDs is about more than just compliance—it's about leadership in sustainable industrial practices. India's journey towards cleaner air and sustainable development demands concrete, reliable solutions, and certified RECDs fit this bill perfectly. As these technologies gain ground, they are poised to become a cornerstone of India's broader climate and air quality goals, offering a local solution to a global crisis.

- Anmol Khandelwal, Executive Director, Chakr Innovation

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