

DENR-EMB celebrates the First International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB), joins the rest of the world in celebrating the first International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies today (September 7).

The celebration of the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies was made possible through Resolution No. 212, which was adopted during the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, on December 19, 2019.

According to EMB OIC-Director William P. Cuñado, this day aims to promote the importance of clean air to health, the economy and the environment. It also aims to demonstrate the close link of air quality to other environmental challenges such as climate change; and bring together national, regional and international approaches for effective air quality management.

"The International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, reminds us of our continuous quest for clean air, while at the same time, finding and strengthening solutions and policies to address various environmental challenges such as climate change," Cuñado said.

In the Philippines, the EMB is the primary government agency mandated to lead the implementation of Republic Act 8749, or the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999.

The said Act outlines the government's measures to reduce air pollution by including environmental protection activities in its development plans. It has adopted the "polluters pay principle" and other market-based instruments to promote self-regulation among the population. Emission standards are set for all motor vehicles and had issued pollutant limitations among industries.

Early this year, the EMB has issued Memorandum Circular 2020-003, mandating all its Regional Offices to establish an Air Quality Network Center using a Uniform Data Acquisition and Handling System (DAHS). This system shall act as a central repository of all data and information related to industrial emissions of firms required to install a Continuous Emission Monitoring System (CEMS) or Continuous Opacity Monitoring System (COMS).

CEMS and COMS involve the installation of monitoring equipment which accumulates data on a pre-determined stack or duct. CEMS generally refers to a packaged system of gas (oxygen, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide) analyzers and sampling system, temperature, flow and opacity monitors that are integrated with a data acquisition system to demonstrate environmental regulatory compliance of various industrial sources of air pollutants. Meanwhile, a COMS refers to the total equipment necessary for determining light transmittance, passing through a flue gas (gas exiting the atmosphere via a flue), or for measuring the optical density (ability to absorb or block the passage of light) of a flue gas.

All EMB Regional Offices are mandated to establish a secure infrastructure to receive and store CEMS/COMS data, and that their respective DAHS must be made accessible in the DAHS of the Central Office. All firms operating CEMS/COMS are also required to transmit real time data to the EMB Regional Offices.

Likewise, on May 11, 2020, the EMB has issued Memorandum Circular 2020-17, containing Guidelines on the Issuance of Permit to Operate (PTO) for Air Pollution Source Installation or

Equipment (APSI/APSE). Application for the said Permit is done through the Bureau's Online Permitting and Monitoring Systems (OPMS). Upon receipt of complete documents and payment of required fees, the EMB Regional Office issues the PTO to an applicant within twenty (20) working days.

“Since we are now in the “new normal,” we should not just prioritize our health and well-being. This is also the time for us to show great appreciation and concern for our environment, especially the air that we breathe,” Director Cuñado said.

For other laws and policies related to Clean Air, the Clean Air Act, and Air Quality Management, visit the EMB-AQMS website at <http://air.emb.gov.ph> ###