

Tondo dumpsite resumes operations

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has allowed Philippine Ecology System Corp. (PhilEco) to resume operations of its marine garbage transfer station at Pier 18 in Tondo, Manila.

The agency said the move is based on the motion for reconsideration filed by PhilEco. The DENR's Environmental Management Bureau in the National Capital Region (EMB-NCR) lifted the suspension order it earlier issued against the firm over the discharge of waste leachate and spillage of garbage materials in Manila Bay from its Vitas Marine Loading Station (VMLS).

The provisional clearance was issued upon the directive of environment secretary Roy Cimatu, who ordered EMB-NCR to make sure PhilEco will be made accountable for its violations and comply with all the conditions in its environmental compliance certificate (ECC). PhilEco also settled a P150,000 fine for violating certain provisions in its ECC for the transfer station.

In a resolution dated Oct. 10, 2017, the EMB-NCR noted substantial compliance by PhilEco since Cimatu himself inspected the VMLS where he confirmed the adverse findings against the firm, including the leachate from voluminous solid wastes dumped at the transfer station directly discharging into Manila Bay.

However, EMB-NCR director Vizmindia Osorio clarified the corrective measures undertaken so far were only short-term in nature in order to immediately stop the discharge of waste leachate into Manila Bay.

"We can withdraw the provisional clearance at any time should we find PhilEco renegeing on its commitment to fully implement specific long-term measures we laid out to prevent a repeat of their ECC violations," Osorio said.

The DENR said among the short-term measures implemented by PhilEco include the repair works at the facility's seawall, installation of nets at the docking area to prevent garbage spillage during loading activities, and installation of pumps that suck leachate materials from the waste collection area into containers that are eventually transported to the Navotas Sanitary Landfill.

Osorio added that PhilEco was given up to three months to rehabilitate its 100 meter seawall, set up a secured holding or containment area for collected waste materials delayed for transfer during inclement weather, and put up litter fences around the three-hectare facility. For the long-term, the company is expected to implement the absolute prohibition of scavengers and trash pickers in the facility.

DENR claimed that scavengers who climb garbage collection trucks going to the VMLS compound were also responsible for proliferation of roadside litter and scattering of collected garbage within the facility.

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