

Managing Modern Waste

[Abhishek Behl / FG]

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What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on, asked Henry David Thoreau once. Samit Jain, Managing Director of Pluss Polymers, a Gurgaon-based Materials Research and Manufacturing Company, also believes in this philosophy and has been working towards creating eco-awareness in the Millennium City - as it could deeply impact its 'livability quotient' in the near future. To ensure that Gurgaon is not burdened by the e-Waste menace, Pluss Polymers has launched an awareness drive on Electronic Waste and its impact on our health and the environment. Jain says that although Pluss is a small organization, it believes that if the cause is right and commitment is in the proper direction, then these goals can be achieved.

Right now Pluss is working with Advit Foundation to collect e-Waste from across the City, and a target of collecting 5,000 kg of e-Waste has been set for this year. Jain says that they recently organised a drive in (DLF) Belvedere Towers and collected 100 kg of e-Waste - comprised of mobiles, monitors, CFL lights, chargers and several other items. The Drive has been launched because the electronics that we buy contain a significant concentration of heavy metals and other chemicals, which can spread into the environment if they are not disposed of safely. "We have tied up with

a Manesar-based company that specializes in the disposal of e-Waste", adds Jain. The problem has become acute, as the use of electronic products has multiplied in the last few years, with products becoming cheaper and more easily available. Jain feels that the 'planned' obsolescence of electronic products, such as mobiles and computers, is one of the primary reasons for a fast-growing surplus of Electronic Waste around the globe. "Solid waste management, which is already a mammoth task in India, is becoming even more complicated with the invasion of e-Waste", he adds. With most electronic products - including ACs, washing machines and other gadgets - containing harmful substances such as lead, cadmium, beryllium or brominated flame retardants, the Team at



Pluss Polymers feels that it important to dispose of these materials in a safe manner. "Any spill, leak or leach into the ground or water, as is happening in Gurgaon right now when these materials are not disposed of safely, is going to badly affect the eco-system", warns Jain. These chemicals will get added

to the ground water and soil, and pollute the environment of the City, which is already under stress. Toxic materials like mercury, lead and cadmium are very harmful to both humans and the environment. Therefore a proper collection and disposal of e-Waste is needed, rather than accumulating it in houses or just throwing away in the 'trash 'or selling to the unorganized sector, opines Jain. To ensure that this does not happen, Pluss Polymers is organising awareness sessions and collection drives in condominiums and schools. All the e-Waste collected during these initiatives will be sent to an authorised Recycler - for its segregation, recovery of recyclable components and safe disposal of the remaining scrap. Jain says that the Programme is being run with the knowledge and support from Advit Foundation - a not-

Explaining the seriousness of the issue, Jain says that one desktop and one 17" monitor equates to the use of 22 kg of chemicals, 1500 kg of water and 240 kg of fossil fuel. If these 'things' are not disposed of properly, it could lead to a heavy contamination of our natural resources. He further states that if a tonne of steel is recycled - instead of producing virgin steel - it can save 40 percent of the water and 75 per cent of the energy, and reduce air emissions by 86 per cent and water pollution by 76 per cent

for-profit organization closely working with Pluss Polymers on various environment initiatives.

Jain says that almost 40 to 50 million tonnes of e-Waste are generated across the world. "In India we recycle only 12 to 13 per cent of our e-Waste and this does not augur well for our environment. The frequency with which we are upgrading our mobile phones, televisions and computers, particularly in Gurgaon, will lead to massive e-Waste issues - for which the government does not even have a plan", he says. He adds that the government (and MCG in the City) will have to come up with a holistic environment plan for managing the rising gap between e-Waste generation and recycling. There is an urgent need to push the 'two-bin' waste disposal system - wherein plastic and other waste is segregated at the household level itself. The government must also create awareness about this issue, to ensure proper collection, segregation and disposal of e-waste. The Pluss Team wants corporates to come forward and take responsibility, and help in the safe disposal of the products they sell. Going forward, Jain says that Pluss Polymers and Advit Foundation would try to become a link between the communities and the authorised recyclers. "We will conduct awareness sessions at the designated sites, launch collection drives, set up a plan to encourage the 'two bin' system, and also issue certificates to participants", he promises. ♦

Erase the e-waste

On World Environment Day, PLUSS Polymers, a material research and manufacturing company, in association with Advit Foundation arranged an environmental sustainability session at IKEA's office in Gurgaon. The focus was on Electronic Waste (e-waste) Management, its impact on our health and environment, and the need for its safe disposal. "Our earth is turning into a dump zone; it is important for us to take up the responsibility of relieving Nature of this dump. We have been working with Advit Foundation to collect e-waste from across the City and have set ourselves a collection target of 5,000 kg for the year," said **Samit Jain, Managing Director - PLUSS Polymers**. Pluss Polymers has erased 102 kgs. of electronic waste from its office and from the Rajiv Gandhi Renewable Energy Park. The e-waste was later sent to a reputed and authorised recycler in Gurgaon. "Items included in e-waste are: non-functional monitors, CPUs, keyboards, mice, laptops, printer cartridges, UPSs, printers, scanners, CDs, cassettes, cable wires, telephones sets, mobile phones, chargers, tube lights, batteries, etc.," stated **Chandramouli, Programme Manager, Advit Foundation**. ♦

