

**In-Depth**

# Where does Hyderabad's garbage go? Journey through the city's waste disposal system

(/article/where-does-hyderabad%E2%80%99s-garbage-go-journey-through-city%E2%80%99s-waste-disposal-system-35840)

The News Minute travels along with the Hyderabad's garbage, from the dustbins to the dumps, to show you why waste-segregation at home is important.

Swetha Dandapani (<https://www.thenewsminute.com/author-articles/Swetha-Dandapani>) |

Monday, November 09, 2015 - 19:26

([whatsapp://send?](https://whatsapp://send?text=Where+does+Hyderabad%E2%80%99s+garbage+go%3F+Journey+through+the+city%E2%80%99s+waste+disposal+sy)

text=Where+does+Hyderabad%E2%80%99s+garbage+go%3F+Journey+through+the+city%E2%80%99s+waste+disposal+sy  
https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thenewsminute.com%2Farticle%2Fwhere-does-  
hyderabad%25E2%2580%2599s-garbage-go-journey-through-city%25E2%2580%2599s-  
waste-disposal-system-35840) ([https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thenewsminute.com%2Farticle%2Fwhere-does-hyderabad%25E2%2580%2599s-garbage-go-journey-through-city%25E2%2580%2599s-)  
u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thenewsminute.com%2Farticle%2Fwhere-does-  
hyderabad%25E2%2580%2599s-garbage-go-journey-through-city%25E2%2580%2599s-



hyderabad%25E2%2580%2599s-garbage-go-journey-through-city%25E2%2580%2599s-  
waste-disposal-system-  
(https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute)  
35840&text=Where+does+Hyderabad%E2%80%99s+garbage+go%3F+Journey+through+the+city%E2%80%99s+waste+disposal+system+35840  
(http://reddit.com/submit?  
(https://twitter.com/thenewsminute)  
url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thenewsminute.com%2Farticle%2Fwhere-does-  
hyderabad%25E2%2580%2599s-garbage-go-journey-through-city%25E2%2580%2599s-waste-disposal-system-35840  
(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3iz)  
&title=Where+does+Hyderabad%E2%80%99s+garbage+go%3F+Journey+through+the+city%E2%80%99s+waste+disposal+system+35840

≡ The NEWS Minute

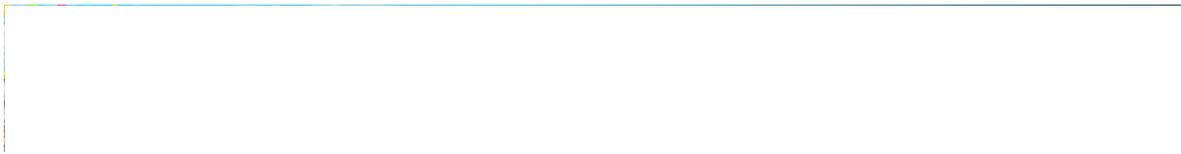


(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

Advertisement





It is tough to understand the scale of garbage as a problem until one witnesses an open dump or see garbage being burned. That little bag emanating stench which gets out of our household piles up at such a massive scale that it amounts to more than 5000 tonnes of waste a day in a city like Hyderabad.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

It is a common assumption among urban residents that once their waste leaves their home, it is not their problem. But when we throw “away” our garbage, it does not really stop being our problem.

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

We trace the journey of Hyderabad's garbage from the dustbins to the mammoth dumps when they end up. The journey shows how our lethargy to segregate our waste adds to the problem, how unprepared waste-disposal workers are for the hazardous nature of the job and how unscientific our landfills are.

Advertisement



**From your doorstep to the segregation point**



“The men usually do the round and the women segregate,” says Shekhar, as he explains the process of waste collection in the Begumpet area in Hyderabad where he works as a collector. Beside him are two women, sorting garbage with their bare hands amidst the unbearable stench.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

Most waste collectors are either contractual employees of the municipal corporation or are independently paid by resident welfare associations. In some cases, workers are also paid by every household individually and make their living out of this monthly collection. They are equipped with a tricycle cart that helps them make multiple trips across the colonies they serve. Usually for 200 households, 2 or 3 workers working 7 hours a day are required to collect and segregate all the trash.

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)



### ***Garbage collected in a cart***

One tricycle cart fills garbage from about 30 households. Sometimes, each household has three floors of independent living, all of which generate trash every single day. For a colony with 300 households, it takes Shekhar 9 trips on his cart to take it to the next collection point.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)



### ***Video : What does trash from 30 households look like***

But a large part of the everyday work that we fail to pay attention to is the amount of segregation our waste asks for. All waste collectors make a living out of the meager monthly collection fee and sale of recyclables.

This means that every single day they sift through lot of severely unsanitary waste including baby diapers, sanitary napkins and sometimes hazardous waste like used batteries, with bare hands and pull out recyclable material including paper,



plastic, metal, glass and cardboard, out of which they earn additional income.

They are either not provided with gloves, masks and boots, or in the rare case that they are given gloves, they refuse to use them owing to ease of work.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)



(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

***Video: A closer look at segregation***

Sometimes this also includes bio-medical waste such as syringes, though this is supposed to be disposed off appropriately by the respective hospitals or medical centers in accordance with the Bio Medical Waste Management rules.



(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

### ***A syringe as part of other segregated waste***

### **Recyclables to the scrap dealer**

These segregated recyclable materials gets bagged and sent to scrap dealers. Scrap dealers or kabadiwallas, as they are popularly called, are the most important points for recycling industry in the country.

However, the kabadiwalla network is not the same in all cities and does not exist on the same scale everywhere. It is usually a business model where waste collectors sell waste to a small or medium sized scrap dealer, who in turn sells the same to a large sized scrap dealer, who eventually transfer it to recycling units.



(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

### ***What it really looks like behind the store front***

Kabadiwallas are responsible for nearly 100% of the recycling that happens in our country; yet, they find no mention in any of our waste management plans, including the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan mission document ([http://moud.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/moud/files/SBM\\_Guideline.pdf](http://moud.gov.in/sites/upload_files/moud/files/SBM_Guideline.pdf)).

### **From the segregation point to the collection points**

A collection point is a fancy name for what is essentially a dumpster. All waste in bins that cannot be recycled, is compacted by large municipal trucks, collected and then gets carried over to a collection point. Hyderabad has 3 collection points (Yousufguda, Imlibun and Lower Tank Bund), which are hubs of busy activity with multiple garbage trucks going back and forth dumping and picking up waste.



We traveled in a garbage truck to one of these collection points, which was roughly 200sqft of pure garbage. Some trucks dumped waste on the ground, while some of them directly transferred waste into other transfer vehicles and in the midst of big machines working.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

As the machines do their job, waste pickers climb their way through piles of garbage to pick out recyclable material. Shockingly enough, children were waiting beside the garbage pile, waiting for their parents to finish the day's work.



***Video: A look at waste pickers in the Yousufguda collection point***

The collection points give a large-scale perspective to the problem of garbage. If these trucks did not travel a few hundred kilometers every day, the city would see tonnes of garbage lying in dumpsters and bins all across (like it happened during the GHMC worker strike



(<http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/Garbage-Piles-up-Across-the-City-as-Sanitation-Workers-Continue-Strike/2015/07/12/article2915500.ece>)).

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

### **Collection point to the landfill**

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

Waste from all the three collection points eventually gets collected and dumped into the landfill at Jawahar Nagar. Earlier there was a landfill in Autonagar, which needed a reprieve and Jawahar Nagar came to the rescue.

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

These garbage trucks are usually run through contracts and drivers are on duty for 24 hours and get the next 24 hours off. One of the truck drivers tells us that he makes 4-5 trips a day to transfer garbage.

Though they are called 'landfills', essentially they are just dumping grounds. A landfill is scientifically constructed to reduce greenhouse gases and is lined to stop leachate waste liquid (in this case) from entering the land or groundwater. However, the "landfill" at Jawahar Nagar is a dumping ground, which is covered with soil from time to time. As one approached a landfill, one can see a little mountain from afar – basically a heap of trash covered in soil.



(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

***The mountain of garbage at a landfill (representative image)***

RamkyEnviro, which currently has the contract to run the landfill was supposed to set up a waste-to-energy plant at this landfill in 2008 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/GHMC-puts-waste-energy-project-on-the-backburner/articleshow/45129098.cms>), but it has been consistently pushed owing to lack of environmental clearances.

If all waste gets collected properly, all our problems are solved, no?

The short answer is, not really. Apart from the obvious issue of the severely unhygienic working conditions for all workers, the current method of waste disposal has several environmental hazards. Even if we avoid burning waste



(which still happens in several parts of the city), the very nature of un-segregated waste and the unscientific landfill is sufficient to cause several health problems.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

We all understand that food waste decomposes naturally. So, when it is not allowed to decompose in an aerobic environment, it starts rotting and quickly becomes a liquid mess. This decomposition releases the severely foul odour (which is hydrogen sulphide) that we usually associate with garbage. But, foul odour is not the only problem with mixed waste.

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

This kind of decomposition finally releases methane and carbon dioxide, which are greenhouse gases. Effectively, garbage on the scale of 5000 tonnes a day releases a large amount of greenhouse gases, which are not just released at the landfill, but are released at every stage of garbage collection, segregation and transfer.

According to a 2007 report ([http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Report\\_INCCA.pdf](http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Report_INCCA.pdf)) by the Ministry of Environment & Forests in India, the waste sector accounted for 57.73 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. Clearly, over the last 8 years, green house gas emissions have consistently increased.

To give you a city-based perspective, waste accounts for emissions to the extent of 19.13 kg/ day of methane and 242.83 kg/day of carbon dioxide ([http://wgbis.ces.iisc.ernet.in/energy/paper/ecoproduction\\_sws/solid\\_waste\\_sector.pdf](http://wgbis.ces.iisc.ernet.in/energy/paper/ecoproduction_sws/solid_waste_sector.pdf)) in Bangalore.

The problems associated with mixed garbage are not restricted to hazardous greenhouse gases, but extends to land and groundwater pollution as well. When we allow organic waste to decompose anywhere, it releases wastewater, which consequently seeps into the ground and contaminates soil and ground water too.



There have been news reports of the lakes around Jawahar Nagar landfill being polluted. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/Woes-pile-up-near-dumping-yard/articleshow/8009474.cms>) A study conducted in by Centre for Water Resources in 2012

(<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute>)

(<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/The-filthy-tale-of-Jawahar-Nagar/articleshow/49176786.cms>), confirmed that the groundwater in the areas surrounding the landfill is not suitable for drinking. The study had stated that the amount of Total Dissolved Salts in the water could cause kidney stones and heart diseases.

(<https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>)

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>)

Additionally, when food waste comes in contact with recyclable dry waste, it severely reduces the recyclability of this material by soiling them. For instance, newspaper which otherwise sells for Rs. 6 a kilo with a scrap dealer, comes down to just Rs. 1 a kilo when soiled by food waste or other liquids. According to this report

([http://www.seas.columbia.edu/earth/wtert/sofos/Sustainable%20Solid%20Waste%20Management%20in%20India\\_I](http://www.seas.columbia.edu/earth/wtert/sofos/Sustainable%20Solid%20Waste%20Management%20in%20India_I) only about 51% of recyclables are effectively recycled in India.

These things come into better perspective when you understand that according to varying studies, 50-70% of municipal solid waste consists of organics/biodegradable. This basically means that in a day, in a city like Hyderabad, we send out more than 2500 tonnes of waste to the landfill, which could effectively be converted into compost.

The highly unscientific manner in which a landfill is constructed add to the pollution of soil, air and groundwater. A landfill could be constructed in a well-defined way (<http://i2.wp.com/wastewise.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Image3.png>) in order to minimize such pollution to almost zero.



### So, what should really be done?

There are several steps to be implemented by the municipal corporations and by private entities including scientifically designed landfills, appropriate disposal of hazardous waste and decentralized dry waste collection centers to ensure right steps in incorporating good waste management practice. <https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsMinute> <https://twitter.com/thenewsminute>

However, there is one significantly important thing that all households need to strictly implement. We can segregate our waste. Segregation of waste at source is a requirement in the draft rules of Municipal Solid Waste Rules, 2015. This means that you need to ensure you keep the wet, dry, and sanitary& hazardous waste separate. Additionally, if you compost your food waste, which is an aerobic decomposition of organic material, no greenhouse gases get released. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCspQie3i2>

This not only severely reduces the work involved for all waste workers, but also reduces nearly half the waste that eventually goes to greenhouse gas emitting landfills.

So, before you buy a carbon credit, or share a Facebook post about planting trees, you should buy three colour coded bins – you will do a lot more to save the environment.

#### The News Minute newsletter

Sign up to get handpicked news and features sent to your inbox

Subscribe

### Theatre