

City acts after ministry requires tougher measures

Langfang city in Hebei province will redouble its efforts to control air pollution by the end of October, as required by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, local authorities said on Thursday.

The ministry announced last week that it would be supervising the city's efforts going forward. "We will take stricter measures to shut down or oversee polluting companies that have been identified by the ministry," said Li Chunyuan, deputy head of the Langfang Environmental Protection Bureau.

The ministry said in a notice on its website on Friday that it will oversee Langfang's work on air pollution control because the city, which has been haunted by environmental issues in recent years, still has many prominent problems to deal with.

"Some local government officials of Langfang don't realize the seriousness of the environmental issues and are slow to implement related plans, leading to continuous illegal pollution-discharging activities by clusters of companies," the notice said.

According to the notice, two counties in Langfang, including Wenan and Dacheng, are facing serious pollution caused by a number of companies making plywood and thermal insulation materials, and processing plastics and nonferrous metals, all of which are polluting.

According to Langfang Daily, 2,290 companies in 20 clusters were identified by the ministry.

Most of the companies emit volatile organic waste without proper processing, it said. They have poor environmental protection facilities, directly discharge waste or disperse it in the open air.

According to Li, all of the companies processing nonferrous metals in Dacheng county have been closed permanently, while some others were temporarily shut down pending improvements.

This is the first time the ministry has stepped in directly to oversee a city's work on preventing air pollution since earlier last month when it began intensified environmental scrutiny in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, chinanews.com reported.

Beyond Langfang, the ministry also found clusters of polluting companies – the major environmental issue for the region – in Binzhou and Jining, Shandong province; Cangzhou and Hengshui, Hebei province; Yangquan and Changzhi, Shanxi province; and Zhengzhou, Henan province.

All will be urged by inspection teams designated by the ministry to deal with pollution in a more timely manner.