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# Fire brigades plan to harvest rainwater

Look To Save 15 Lakh Litres Of Drinking Water

Somit Sen | TNN

Mumbai: The Mumbai fire brigade has proposed to save at least 15 lakh litres of drinking water for the city annually by introducing water harvesting at each of its 33 fire stations, using well water and digging borewells.

"Instead of the potable water firemen use to douse flames, we have decided to switch to alternative sources so that we can conserve valuable drinking water," said chief fire officer Anil Sawant. He explained that according to the current practice, fire engines tank up with potable water from hydrants across the city. Water tankers have a capacity of 8,000-10,000 litres. In a year, the fire brigade handles at least 100 calls, and often, as many as five tankers are used to put out the flames.

Fire stations like the one at Marol have already begun water harvesting, and others will follow shortly. "We have also identified wells whose water can be used for firefighting," Sawant said, citing a well in Shivaji Park that can be used to douse flames in the surrounding areas of Dadar, Prabhadevi, Mahim and Matunga.

Welcoming the move, BMC's hydraulic engineer M M Kamble called it "a great gesture." "We have a shortfall of drinking water in Mumbai and any kind of conservation is appreciated," he said. Joint chief fire



## EVERY DROP COUNTS

Hydraulic engineer M M Kamble said that citizens should do their bit to conserve water. "Domestic workers often keep the tap running while washing utensils or clothes when they could easily turn it off. Also, citizens should not use hose pipes to water plants or wash cars," he said. He added that several households wasted nearly 100 litres of water daily. "If you use the toilet to urinate, you need only 1.5 litres of water to flush, instead of the nearly 10 litres that we use. This is sheer wastage," he pointed out.

## What is rainwater harvesting?

Rainwater harvesting is a method by which rainwater is stored so that it can be used later. The catchment area can be the terrace of the building compound. The rainwater is channelled through HDPE/PVC pipes which have a filter. A valve system enables the first washings from the terrace catchment, to keep out the dirt. The tank, where the water is conserved, is usually underground and adequate care is taken to ensure that the mouths of pipes and the tank are covered with mosquito or insect-proof meshing.

officer D J Gaitonde said, "There are times when a fire engine or tanker has to travel 3 to 5 km to the nearest water source for

a refill. If water is harvested or procured from a well/source near the fire brigade, it will also help us save fuel and time."