

Ammonium nitrate rules amended

September 23, 2021

In news- Keeping in mind of the explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, in August last year that led to the deaths of over 200 people, the government has amended rules for storage and handling of ammonium nitrate to improve public safety.

Ammonium Nitrate (Amendment) Rules, 2021-

- The **amendments include provision for adequate fire fighting facilities in storage and handling areas, improvement of flooring in storage and handling area,** provision for auction of serviceable seized Ammonium Nitrate and disposal if not fit for use and specification of safety distance from port area has also been prescribed.
- In order to promote 'Ease of doing Business', the **transfer of Ammonium Nitrate from one location to another of the same licensee has been permitted now.**
- The Rules have been amended to exclude regulation of stevedores (agency handling loading / unloading of AN on ship).
- Provision has been made for **adequate fire-fighting facilities and shelters for security guards.**
- **Ammonium Nitrate received at the ports is now required to be removed / transferred to the nearby storage houses situated 500 m beyond the port area.**
- **The time for disposal** (including enquiry, decision to grant or refuse) of the application for seeking '**No Objection Certificate**' from District Authority or Director General of Mine Safety **has been reduced** from 6 months to 3 months.
- The **capacity for storage of Ammonium Nitrate in small storehouses has been enhanced** by rationalizing the space

and quantity requirement.

- Towards safe and speedy disposal, rule has been amended to allow auction of the seized lots of Ammonium Nitrate.
- **To curb pilferage of Ammonium Nitrate, provisions have been made to import Ammonium Nitrate in bagged form only.** This will reduce the handling of loose Ammonium Nitrate at port and therefore will enhance safety.
- The need for submitting applications and fees to **obtain a duplicate license has been eliminated.** System generated online copy will be sufficient.

What is Ammonium Nitrate(NH₄N₃)?

- Ammonium nitrate is a crystal-like white solid which is made in large industrial quantities.
 - Its biggest use is as a source of nitrogen for fertiliser, but it is also used to create explosives for mining.
 - It is highly soluble in water and hygroscopic as a solid, although it does not form hydrates.
 - Ammonium nitrate is made all over the world and is relatively cheap to buy.
- But storing it can be a problem, and it has been associated with serious industrial accidents in the past.
 - When ammonium nitrate explodes, it can release toxic gases including nitrogen oxides and ammonia gas.