

Chapter-V

Public Health Engineering Department

5.1 Introduction

The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) of Rajasthan plays a pivotal role in ensuring clean, safe, and accessible drinking water for every household in the State. It is responsible for planning, designing, execution, and maintenance of water supply projects in rural and urban areas of the State. It is also committed to development of ground and surface water resources.

The Secretary is the Administrative Head of the department, who is assisted by the Joint Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Chief Engineers. The Additional Chief Engineers, Superintending Engineers and Executive Engineers are responsible for carrying out departmental activities at Regional, Circle and Divisional level respectively.

5.2 Results of audit

There were 331 auditable units in the PHED, out of these, 47 units were selected for the audit in the financial year 2022-23. During the audit, the significant cases of execution of additional quantities without obtaining competent approval (₹ 3.38 crore) and extra expenditure due to laying of pipeline along the State Highway without obtaining permission (₹ 1.24 crore) were noticed, which have been included in this Chapter. Audit also observed some other irregularities, which are illustrative and based on test-checks. The audit had pointed out similar omissions in earlier years, but these irregularities remained persisted till the next audit was conducted. These irregularities broadly fall under the categories given in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1: Statement showing the category-wise irregularities observed by the audit during the year 2022-23 and the objected amount

(₹ in crore)			
Sl. No.	Category	Number of cases	Amount
1.	Undue benefits to contractors through irregular expenditure/excess payments in respect of execution of the capital/O&M works	166	1,748.35
2.	Lack of levying compensation for non-maintenance of pro-rata progress of work by the contractors and non-recovery of compensation levied	74	214.62
3.	Avoidable expenses	12	67.52
4.	Non-recovery/short recovery of royalty/District Mineral Foundation Trust	40	12.62
5.	Wasteful expenditure/blockage of public money	43	112.66
6.	Lack of recovery of outstanding water revenue	30	82.94
7.	Irregular sanction of extra/excess items	22	43.00
8.	Other irregularities	486	432.85
Total		873	2,714.56

Source: Compiled based on the Inspection Report issued to the Department.

5.3 Payment without obtaining approval from the competent authority

The Department executed additional quantities of works more than 50 per cent amounting to ₹3.38 crore, without obtaining necessary approvals from competent authorities

The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) issued a circular (22 May 2019) regarding ‘Schedule of Power’ for making payment of additional quantity more than 50 per cent of any item executed during different periods. According to this circular, approvals of various authorities were required for execution of above additional quantities.

The PHED issued (July 2013) a work order amounting to ₹ 143.50 crore to a contractor for Package-3A under ‘Pokaran-Falsoond-Balotra-Siwana Lift Water Supply Project’. The work was completed in May 2022 with an expenditure of ₹ 124.20 crore.

Scrutiny (August 2023) of records of Executive Engineer, PHED, Project Division Pokaran revealed that the Department executed the additional quantities more than 50 per cent amounting to ₹ 3.38 crore in Package-3A without obtaining competent approval from the Finance Committee/Finance Department, as per the details given in **Table 5.2** below:

Table 5.2: Details of the approval required for execution of additional quantities more than 50 per cent and the quantities executed thereagainst in different periods

Period	Name of the authority whose approval was required as per the Government circular	Name of item	Quantities executed (in percentage)
08 March 2017 and 22 March 2018	Finance Department	Earthwork for 125mm DI K-7 pipe	65.04
		Providing, laying, jointing, testing, commissioning of 125mm DI K-7 pipe	65.04
After 22 March 2018	Finance Committee of Rajasthan Water Supply and Sewerage Management Board (with prior approval) and Finance department (if prior approval was not taken)	Earthwork for 110mm uPVC pipe	112.69
		Providing, laying, jointing, testing, commissioning of 110mm uPVC pipe	112.69
		Junction box (1,500 mm*1,200 mm) for RCC chambers for the valves	56.52

Further, if prior approval is not taken for execution after 22 March 2018, the responsibility of the officer concerned was to be fixed for this as per the circular *ibid*. However, no action was taken against the defaulter officers (as of March 2025).

The State Government, while accepting the audit observation, stated (March 2025) that the enquiry has been initiated in this matter and the appropriate action would be taken against the defaulter officers.

5.4 Laying of clear water trunk main pipeline without obtaining necessary permission

The PHED laid the clear water trunk main pipeline without obtaining necessary permission from the Public Works Department. This resulted in an extra burden of ₹ 1.24 crore to the Government exchequer in re-laying of pipeline

Clause 2.4.2 (18) of the contract agreement (Vol.-II) of Package 2B of 'Pokaran-Falsoond-Balotra-Siwana Lift Water Supply Project' provides for making all necessary arrangements by the contractor for pipeline crossing National Highway, State Highway, and other roads or laying parallel thereof. It was the contractor's responsibility to obtain necessary approvals/permissions from respective departments for execution of such work and the PHED was required to assist the contractor in getting necessary approvals/permissions.

The PHED issued (September 2012) work order of Package 2B to a contractor. Under the work, the contractor started (October 2013) laying of clear water trunk main pipeline from Balotra to Siwana, along single lane State Highway. This road was notified as National Highway in March 2014.

Scrutiny of records (December 2023) of Executive Engineer, PHED, Project Division Balotra revealed that the contractor deployed by the PHED started pipeline work along the State Highway without obtaining necessary permission from the Public Works Department (PWD). Later, EE, National Highway Division, PWD, Barmer found (August 2015) the laid pipeline in the zone of Right of Way¹ and therefore, intimated the PHED to stop the work. However, the contractor and the PHED ignored the request and continued laying the pipeline.

Afterwards, the PWD removed (June 2019) 975 meter pipeline near *Moothly* village as it was affecting widening work of road during its conversion into National Highway. Further, the Finance Committee of the RWSSMB approved (February 2022) an estimated cost of ₹ 1.24 crore for re-laying the pipeline and the pipeline was re-laid (July 2022) by the PHED. Thus, laying pipeline without obtaining necessary permission resulted in an extra burden to the Government exchequer.

¹ The Right of Way is the total land width required for the Project Highway, to accommodate the roadway (carriageway and shoulders), side drains, service roads, tree plantation, utilities, etc.

The State Government stated (August 2024 and March 2025) that the pipeline was laid safely away from carriageway of existing road. It also mentioned that no objection was raised by the PWD during the work.

The reply is contradictory to the facts mentioned in the report of the joint site visit conducted (August 2015) by the officers of the PWD and the PHED. This report clearly mentioned that the pipeline work was irrational and executed in zone of Right of Way without appropriate permission. Further, removal of the pipeline by the PWD during widening work of road also confirms that the pipeline was not laid safely away from the carriageway of existing road.