



Celebrating
25 Years
1995-2020

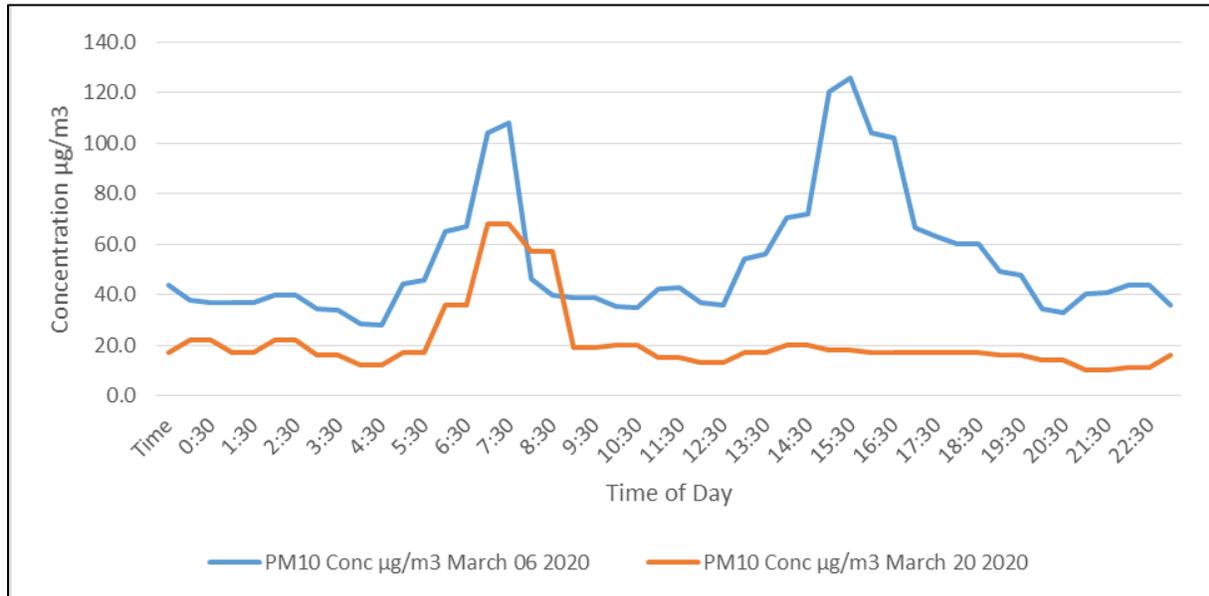
OBSERVATIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY DURING COVID 19 RESTRICTIONS

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) used the opportunity of the COVID-19 restrictions and 'stay at home' measures, announced by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in March 2020, to analyse data on ambient air quality and general complaints received as well as the Recyclable Solid Waste Programme. This was in an effort to evaluate and report on any observed trends.

AMBIENT AIR QUALITY

To assess the potential impact of the imposed measures on air quality, the EMA analysed data from three (3) of its Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AAQMS). In Trinidad, these are located at Beetham - Port of Spain (POS), Point Lisas (PL) – Couva and the third station is situated at Signal Hill (SH) in Tobago.

Data evaluated from the AAQMS during this period, showed that the daily average levels of air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) were higher for the first half of March 2020. In the latter half of March, when stay at home measures were introduced the pollution levels were lower on average, and spikes associated with periods of increased traffic were also lower. At the POS AAQMS, for instance, the average concentration of PM₁₀ and NO₂ decreased between March 02, 2020 and March 27, 2020 with the largest decrease for PM₁₀ being 41.9% (see Graph 1).



Graph 1: A Comparison of PM₁₀ Concentrations for March 06, 2020 and March 20, 2020 at Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

Notably, a similar pattern was also observed with the daily Air Quality Index (AQI) - a tool utilised internationally to link air quality with its effect on human health. Daily indices of air quality in POS, PL and SH are provided through a web-based interface. In mid to late March, there was an overall increase in the number of good AQI days, at all three sites. This observation is in keeping with studies done in other cities of the world that have introduced ‘stay at home’ measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that these trends would continue during ‘stay at home’ measures in place with less anthropogenic activities.

The AQI is an important indicator, as the higher the value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. The EMA intends to expand the AAQMS network to a total of ten stations, eight in Trinidad and two in Tobago by 2025. The Authority is currently in the process of establishing the third AAQMS in Trinidad by end of 2020.

The EMA will continue to monitor and the public can view the daily Air Quality Index, as well as further details in the EMA’s Air Quality and COVID-19 report at www.ema.co.tt.

NOISE & OTHER COMPLAINTS

To assess the impact on noise pollution, the EMA reviewed complaints received through the Emergency Response and Investigations Unit (ERI) and Hotline Unit.

The EMA received two hundred and thirty-one (231) complaints during the period January to March 22, 2020. One hundred and ninety-six (196) were assessed to be investigated within the jurisdiction of the EMA. The remaining thirty-five (35) complaints were referred to other Government agencies with primary jurisdiction for their attention and relevant action. The majority of complaints were received by phone or email and were related to noise (see Table 1). The second highest group of complaints was associated with the designated activities related to the Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC) Rules and the third highest was related to spills and releases.

During the period March 23, 2020 to April 30, 2020, seventy eight (78) complaints were received, the majority of which were received via email. Fifty-three (53) complaints were within the EMA's remit and the remaining twenty-five (25) complaints were either referred to external agencies or required further information to be adequately assessed. The majority of complaints were related to external referrals and the next highest group was associated with spills and releases (see Table 1).

Table 1: Categories of complaints received by EMA from January 1, 2020 to April 30, 2020. (Source: EMA Complaint Database, 2020).

Category	January 01 to March 22, 2020	March 23 to April 30, 2020
Air	6	2
Designated Activity under the CEC Rules	50	13
Dumping	3	2
Environmental	8	2
Noise	73	5
Spills and Releases	51	21
External Referrals	35	25
Animal deaths	4	0
Unknown*	1	8
Total	231	78

*EMA requested further information for the complaints categorized as unknown, which are still under investigation

There was a significant reduction (93%) in the number of noise complaints received for this period which is normally associated with parties, fetes, bars, clubs, lounges and restaurants.

The EMA hopes that when businesses reopen, more attention will be paid to neighbourly/community responsibility with respect to noise pollution which continues to negatively impact many of our citizens.

MAINTAINING A RECYCLING CULTURE DURING COVID 19

The EMA's Green Fund sponsored Recyclable Solid Waste Collection Project (also known as iCARE) continued to provide the infrastructure for the responsible disposal of beverage containers.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, material collection at iCARE collection sites were sustained as an essential service. Haulage contractors continued to service and sanitise these bins while adhering to health and safety guidelines.

Even with COVID 19 restrictions in place, persons are still utilizing iCARE recyclable collection bins. This is indicative that recycling behaviour has been adopted and maintained by many households.

The EMA thanks members of the public for their consistent use of the iCARE bins. We further encourage other individuals and households to consider the impact of improper waste disposal and take steps to adopt more sustainable practices. Please visit **iCARE TT** on Facebook and www.ema.co.tt to learn more about the iCARE Recycling Project.

END

Please contact the EMA's Emergency Response Hotline at 680-9588 in the event of an environmental incident. For complaints, email us at complaints@ema.co.tt or visit our website at www.ema.co.tt

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