

POSH Compliance Is Entering a New Era

From policy compliance to enforcement compliance.

NCW calls for Mandatory POSH Audits Across India

The implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) has long been a challenge.

Most organisations have formal POSH policies, but compliance gaps continue to exist in:

- ✓ Constitution of Internal Committees (ICs)
- ✓ Improper employee training
- ✓ Delayed annual reporting
- ✓ Weak grievance redressal





What has the NCW recommended?

An **18-point advisory** to Chief Secretaries, Directors General of Police, District Magistrates, Senior Superintendents of Police and Police Commissioners to strengthen implementation of the POSH Act across government, private, organised and unorganised sectors.

Key recommendations include:

1. **Mandatory annual POSH compliance audits** for establishments employing 10 or more persons, in addition to the existing annual reporting obligations under Sections 21 and 22 of the Act.
2. Establishment of **State/UT level POSH Monitoring Cells** or digital compliance dashboards to track effective implementation of the act.
3. **Appointment of District Officers** under the POSH Act in every district to monitor implementation.
4. Constitution of legally compliant **Internal Committees (ICs)** in every office, branch and unit employing 10 or more employees including all:
 - Government Departments
 - PSUs
 - Boards, Corporations
 - Educational Institutions
 - Hospitals
 - Local Bodies
 - Statutory Authorities

5. Ensure that **Internal Committees** are constituted in accordance with the **POSH Act**, including:

- A woman Presiding Officer
- An external member
- At least 50% women members

6. Strengthening **Local Committees** to ensure protection for women working in the unorganised sector.

7. District Authorities have been advised to **appoint Nodal Officers** to facilitate complaint registration and ensure timely referral of cases to Local Committees at the following levels:

- Block
- Tehsil
- Taluka
- Ward
- Municipality

8. **Display details of the following** on the organisation's website and office premises:

- Internal Committee,
- Local Committee,
- Complaint mechanism
- Contact information & online grievance mechanisms

9. **Employers** should ensure the following:

- Timely disposal of complaints
- Confidentiality of complaints
- Submission annual reports
- Conduct POSH awareness programmes
- Implementation Committee recommendations promptly.

10. Conduct **regular workshops, training sessions, and awareness programmes** to foster a gender-sensitive and POSH-compliant workplace.
11. Provide **specialised training to Internal and Local Committee members** to ensure fair, sensitive, and legally compliant handling of complaints.
12. Encourage organisations to **use the Government's SHe-Box portal** for online reporting, tracking, and monitoring of POSH complaints.
13. Ensure **timely submission of annual POSH reports** and periodic review of compliance by State authorities.
14. Implement safeguards to **protect complainants, witnesses, and Committee members** from retaliation, discrimination, or victimisation.
15. Universities, schools, hospitals, and similar institutions should **strengthen POSH compliance** to protect students, interns, trainees, and contractual staff.
16. Conduct **POSH awareness campaigns** in rural areas and unorganised workplaces to educate women about their rights under the Act.
17. Adopt a **zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment** and strengthen workplace safety through appropriate infrastructure and support mechanisms.
18. **Strengthen district-level monitoring** through periodic compliance reviews, POSH audits, and awareness initiatives.



Maharashtra is already a step ahead

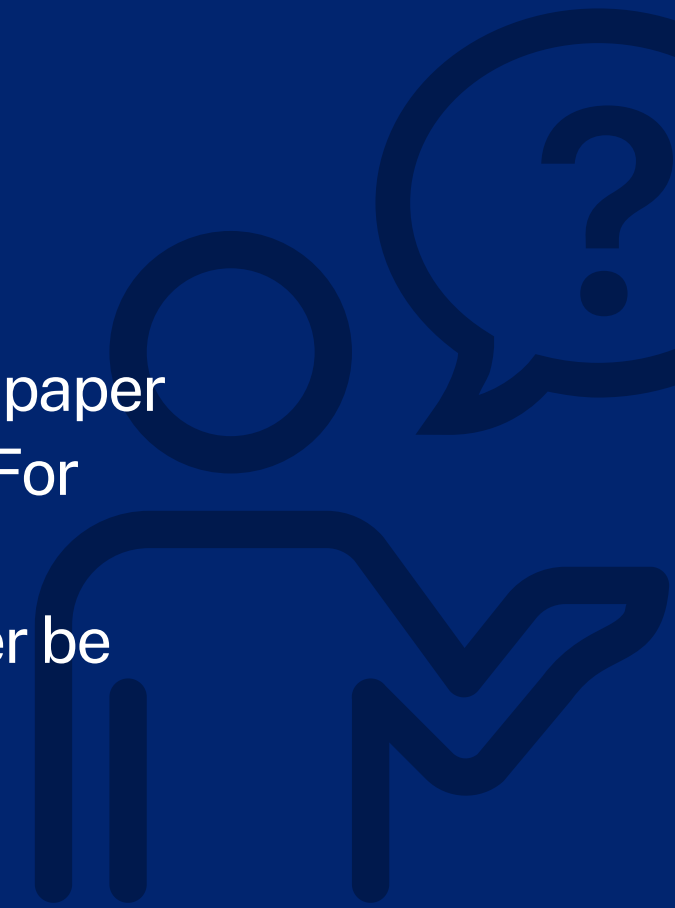
Even before the NCW's advisory, Maharashtra had taken a significant step towards strengthening POSH enforcement.

- In May 2026, the Maharashtra Government empowered designated labour authorities and other authorised officers to conduct inspections of establishments for compliance with the POSH Act.
- The inspection framework enables authorities to verify whether employers have fulfilled their statutory obligations under the Act.
- The inspection mechanism derives support from **Section 25** of the POSH Act, which empowers the appropriate Government to call for information and authorise inspections to verify compliance with the Act.
- Non-compliance may attract penalties under **Section 26**, including monetary penalties and, in cases of repeated violations, cancellation or non-renewal of business licences or registrations.



Why does this matter?

The NCW advisory, coupled with Maharashtra's inspection framework, signals a clear shift from paper compliance to enforcement-based compliance. For employers, merely having a POSH policy or constituting an Internal Committee will no longer be sufficient.



Organisations should:

- Demonstrate compliance with the statutory requirements of the POSH Act
- Ensure that Internal Committees are properly constituted and trained.
- Maintain audit-ready records including complaint registers, inquiry reports, annual reports, and corrective actions..
- Regular employee awareness and IC training programmes are conducted.
- Demonstrate a safe, inclusive, and gender-sensitive workplace culture
- Be inspection ready at all times.

POSH compliance is no longer merely an HR responsibility. It is now a corporate governance and workplace culture issue, that requires active oversight by senior management to ensure compliance, accountability, and employee safety.

Before audits become the norms, employers should:

- Review IC constitution
- Train IC members
- Conduct employee awareness programmes
- Duly maintain inquiry documents
- Ensure annual reporting compliances
- Review POSH policies and processes

The NCW's advisory is not legally binding by itself, but it establishes a strong policy direction for States to strengthen enforcement of the POSH Act.

Maharashtra has already operationalised this approach through an inspection mechanism, and other States may soon adopt similar compliance and audit frameworks.

