

DEFINE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Dr. H. Santhosha Kumari

Guide and Supervisor,
Assistant Professor, Department of History,
Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil. Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar
University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, 627012, Tamil Nadu, India.

S. Sindhu

Research Scholar, Reg.No.20213161082003
Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil. Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar
University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, 627012, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT

The infrastructure is an important aspect in the Government sector and in the public sector. Therefore, the construction of roads, bridges, and all the related civil projects must be organized and systematic. Hence the Public Works Department (PWD) is the organization to handle these government projects. These projects are crucial as they help in the development of the country. For example, a well-constructed road will promote an efficient transportation system that will contribute to the economy of the country. It makes transportation and other operations easier through construction projects. It reduces unemployment by providing opportunities to people having different skills. Therefore, the Public Works Department holds great importance in the progress of the country.

Keywords: Public Works Department, PWD, buildings, roads, irrigation, water facilities, PWD Tamilnadu, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The Public Works Department was a government department that was responsible for buildings, roads, irrigation and railways. Public Works in India, such as the construction of roads, water tank, etc. was originally conducted by the military. This started with the Pioneers and then by the Public Works Department of the Town Major's List (Bengal & Bombay) or the Effective Supernumeraries (Madras). Much of the responsibility for public works was then passed over to a special section of the Indian Civil Service in the mid-19th century.

Later, the military once more took responsibility for much of the public works. Drawing attention of the Government to the unsatisfactory management and state of affairs in public works, the Court of Directors of the East India Company, in early 1850, instituted a Commission in each Presidency for investigation. The members of the Commission were unanimous on the inability of the Military Board in the management of public works. Lord Dalhousie founded the Public Works Department (PWD) through which roads, railways, bridges, irrigation and other public utility works were undertaken.

Origin of Public Works Department in Tamil Nadu

The Public Works Department Tamilnadu (PWD Tamilnadu) -- The Public Works Department of Tamil Nadu which was established in the year 1858 by Lord Dalhousie has turned 150 years. This department has over the years, undergone several structural and organizational changes to be in tune with changes in the political and administrative systems and with pace and orientation in the developmental activities. The Public Works Department is divided into two wings viz., the Water Resources Department and the Buildings Organisation. Public Works Department is one of the oldest Service Departments of the Government, serving for the past 153 years in the construction and maintenance of Government Buildings. Many buildings and monuments stand as testimony to our engineering skill. The organization marches towards better service delivery to the people by adapting to the present day trend of e-governance. The Department is taking all efforts for better service delivery with this long term vision. The Buildings Organisation provides structural safety to all public buildings adopting latest technology and following specifications of Indian Standard Code. All the Monuments and Heritage buildings under the control of Government are being protected by PWD by keeping their Architectural, Aesthetic, Historic, archaeological and prominent symbolic values. This department has long term vision for quality service for safe and purposeful public buildings at reasonable cost adopting best evolved practices and advanced modern technologies.

Define Public Works

Public works is the combination of physical assets, management practices, policies, and personnel necessary for government to provide and sustain structures and services essential to the welfare and acceptable quality of life for its citizens. Public works include a

broad range of services that our municipalities provide to us every day. From water and sewer services, to sanitation, to slating and lowing the roads in the winter, and making sure potholes are filled in the spring and summer. Public works keep our cities and towns running smoothly and efficiently.¹

Public Works Models

In the real world there is no one, ideal structure for a public works operation. Even though some public works services are considered “must haves” in every community, they may not be readily identified on a city organizational chart, or delivered in the same way, or to the same level, from one community to the next. In fact, some municipalities may not even have a department named public works.²

Public Works Services

Although some functions are not common to every community, each of them will have such things as water, utilities, and trash collection unquestionably. What *is* in question is by whom they are delivered. The traditional concept of public works is that governmental units provide the services, own the facilities, and are usually funded through taxation. However, the situation often is not that clear-cut today, and other models also exist, which include publicly owned corporations and partial outsourcing. It’s not uncommon for the private sector to be involved in delivering public works services as well. For instance, some communities may own a fleet of trash collection vehicles, but other communities will contract out that service to private companies. It’s also common for a municipal engineering division to plan and design large construction projects but to contract out the actual construction work.³

Another public works model complete outsourcing or contracting out with a privately owned corporation is somewhat more controversial and considered “borderline” on whether it actually fits the definition of government provision of public works services. Although the services are delivered on behalf of government, the high degree of private sector control and/or risk tends to discount them as valid public works in some people’s consideration.⁴

Public Utilities

Quite often, public utilities such as water, gas, electricity, telephone, mass transportation, and communication facilities are not owned and operated by a government agency. However, even if utilities are not owned by a governmental unit, they still are said to

be “affected with a public interest” and are subject to a degree of government regulation from which other businesses are exempt. In such situations, the utilities often operate as a monopoly in their markets, under a license or franchise, and are required to render adequate service at reasonable prices to all who apply for the service. Although it is not always feasible or cost effective for a municipality to own utilities, the absence of these essential services would be injurious to public health and welfare.⁵ Therefore, whether publicly or privately owned, the services themselves still can be considered public works.

The United States has approximately 19,400 municipalities of varying sizes, and Canada is home to nearly 3,700 more. In each community, whatever its size, there are needs common to all human beings that must be met through the provision of public works services. These needs are met on a daily basis by visionary, values-driven, and hardworking men and women who provide and sustain public works services in the best interests of their communities.

Performs public works

Some public works roles are filled by municipal employees, like water plant operators, while others are filled by public utility employees, like Orange & Rockland workers, and still others are filled by employees of companies such as engineering firms and construction contractors.⁶

Public works employees

In many instances, they are on call and must be ready to respond to a water main break, plough the streets during a blizzard, repair a sewer line, or repair power outages after a thunderstorm. Those who are involved in public works perform work behind the scenes to make sure that residents are able to enjoy the basic necessities and the quality of life that is expected within a municipality.⁷

Without public works, potholes would incapacitate vehicles. Without public works, garbage would not be collected but would be, instead, allowed to pile up, leading to a rampant increase in the rodent and wild animal population in residential areas, ultimately leading to a rise in illness and disease. Public works employees may not always enjoy the limelight, but their jobs are of the utmost importance. As you enjoy your running water, paved roads, and electricity, take a moment to appreciate the people who work behind the scenes, sometimes tirelessly, to provide us with this necessities.⁸

Important dates in the History of PWD

On 21st April 1854, the Bengal Presidency took charge and controlled and managed the PWD. The major sections PWD was divided into are - civil, military, and railway; this was not until 1866. Eventually, in 1866, Lord Lawrence also started the system through which the general public could invest in the public works department.⁹ Hence the department got its investment by borrowing from the public. After the implementation of this system, various projects like Midnapore Canal, Orissa Coast Canal, etc., were constructed. The year 1870 lead to the introduction of a local government system. The Local Government started to follow the British rules. Afterward, in 1893, provincial services were created for each service of the provinces of India. These were divided into the following categories -

1. Engineers
2. Upper Subordinates
3. Lower Subordinates

The engineers were further divided into Imperial Services and Provincial Services.

In 1895, PWD became the exclusive civil department with complete bifurcation from the military branch. PWD is responsible for construction projects and public unity projects such as the construction of buildings, bridges, and railways. As more initiatives were taken to improve the public works department, there was a significant increase in the workload on the department. The public works department was divided into two different departments to reduce the workload. These were known as the public works and irrigation; this was not until 1920.

The PWD is under the state government today. Although the key functions are almost similar to those of the PWD under British, it is now more structured, and management is systematic. The public works department contributes to the country by generating employment, improving the infrastructure, and conducting public works like constructing dams, bridges, roads, and railways. The state government even gave some public work to the district government as the local governments have become much more developed.¹⁰

Functions of Public Works Department

PWD is one of the oldest departments that is responsible for public works. The functions of the PWD include the following -

1. Planning

2. Construction
3. Maintenance
4. Repairs

PWD executes these projects that are financed by the state government and are considered under civil works.

- Public Works Department is the oldest technical department playing a vital role in implementation of Government Schemes and building works of various Government Departments with technical expertise in Engineering in an efficient manner for the growth, development of Tamil Nadu and for the benefit of the people from all categories. Creation of capital assets of the Government, glorious and valuable monuments and public buildings are the prime activities of this department.
- Public Works Department, functions as the parent department for all other engineering Departments. With utmost interest in the healthy and fast growth of the Nation, this department is making achievements in constructing the buildings of various Government Departments with motivation, architectural value and hard work. Public Works Department playing very important role in carrying out the maintenance and renovation of Government buildings.
- Department is vested with the responsibility of Planning, Designing and Construction of Public Buildings and allied works in accordance with needs and requirements of various Government Departments of the State Government.
- This Organisation also undertakes construction of Buildings and other works for the State and Central Government Undertakings, Corporations etc. Besides these, construction and erection of Monuments and Memorials are also carried out by this Organisation. Further renovation and restoration of heritage buildings are also being carried out by this Department.
- Execution of any calamity reconstruction works like emergency works like Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project building works, execution of Local area developments scheme works are also carried out under Member of Legislative Assembly and Member of d M.P. Funds.
- The maintenance of Inspection Bungalows and Circuit Houses, Hon'ble Judges, Ministers and other VVIP's Bungalows are also carried out by this Organisation.

- Local Valuation of Buildings are carried out. Structural Stability Certificate for Cinema Theatres and Public Buildings and Reasonableness of Rent Certificate for the Private Buildings occupied by the Government Offices, are issued by the Buildings Organisation.
- To undertake works of erection of stage, Barricading arrangements, towards lighting and Sound arrangements, providing helipad and issue of Stability Certificate. Electrical works execution for all Government functions & VVIP Visits.¹¹

CONCLUSION

Public Works Department is an organization that is responsible for the construction and civil projects of the Government. Generally, these are development projects such as the construction of government buildings, roads, bridges, canals, etc. Moreover, it is also responsible for the construction of residential places for government employees. All these projects aid in the smooth functioning of the system and add to the economy of the country. It makes transportation and other operations easier through construction projects. It reduces unemployment by providing opportunities to people having different skills.

REFERENCES

1. G.O.No.121, Public Works Department, 12 June 1851.
2. Report of the Public Works Commission, 1852.
3. Baliga, B.S., Studies in Madras Administration, Vol.II, Madras, 1960.
4. Ibid.,
5. ICE Proceedings Volume 16, Issue 3, 01 July 1960.
6. Ibid.,
7. Baliga, B.S., Studies in Madras Administration, Vol.II, Madras, 1960.
8. Ibid.,
9. Pate, H.R., Madras District Gazetteers, Tinnevely, Vol.I, Madras, 1917.
10. Ibid.,
11. wikipedia.com