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KCGM investigates anomalous emission result from Gidji Roaster

KCGM is working with the Department Environmental Protection (DEP) to investigate the cause of an apparent breach of its emissions licence conditions at the Gidji Roaster.

KCGM conducts standard quarterly emissions tests on the Gidji roaster stack. Results obtained in July indicated an average arsenic concentration of 11.6 mg/m³. This was not consistent with arsenic emission levels routinely experienced with the Gidji Roaster stack, and was 1.6 mg/m³ in excess of the 10 mg/m³ level permitted.

While this level appears to be an anomaly, KCGM immediately reported the results to the DEP and initiated further stack testing. Preliminary results from these tests indicate an average arsenic concentration of 3.1 mg/m³. Arsenic measurements from Q1 2000 to Q1 2003 indicate an average arsenic concentration of 2.7 mg/m³.

Winds on the day of testing were not towards town. However even if the wind was blowing towards town, and the anomalous level of 11.6 mg/m³ was found to be representative, local air quality would still have been well below the World Health Organisation standard for arsenic.

"It could simply have been a sampling error, however we will not discount anything, and are working closely with the DEP to investigate all possibilities, including the operating conditions of the roaster," said KCGM General Manager, John Shipp.

KCGM immediately commenced investigations into the possible causes, including consideration of the sampling protocols and the roaster operating conditions.

The review of roaster operating conditions showed that at the time of the test only one roaster was operating. The second roaster was being heated for restart following the annual maintenance shutdown. During this restart process diesel is used to heat the roaster bed until it becomes self-sustaining.

"It is possible that this may have interfered with the chemistry of the roaster bed, or the accuracy of the stack testing measurements," said Mr Shipp.

Following discussions with the DEP, KCGM is undertaking a course of action which includes the retest of stack emissions under a range of operating conditions. This will be done with the appropriate approvals required by the DEP.

"We have retested the stack emissions and those have confirmed that the roaster is operating normally, with arsenic levels well within the licence limits. However, until we have finalised the investigation we will be closely monitoring the Gidji Roaster's performance," said Mr Shipp.

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