

Vedanta concerned about sulphur dioxide leak at KCM smelter

By *mast-admin* on November 17, 2019



[By Creamer Media Reporter]

Diversified miner Vedanta Resources on Friday said it was “deeply concerned” about reports of a sulphur dioxide leak at the Nchanga smelter acid plant owned by Konkola Copper Mines (KCM), in Zambia.

It noted that reports have emerged that KCM employees and pupils attending the nearby Nchanga Trust School were hospitalised as a result.

Vedanta has not had access to any of KCM's facilities since the provisional liquidator Milingo Lungu was appointed on May 21.

Vedanta said it had, on several occasions in the six months since then, attempted to engage with Lungu on areas of concern, especially as regards issues of safety and maintenance at KCM's facilities.

On Friday, over 50 KCM employees and several pupils at Nchanga Trust School were taken to Nchanga South Hospital after being affected by the abnormal Sulphur Dioxide discharge.

According to sources at the mine, the situation which happened around 02:00 hours resulted in more than 50 employees suffocating.

“There was a situation at Konkola Copper Mines during the night shift where 42 employees were taken to Nchanga South Hospital around 02:00 hours related to suffocation from sulphur dioxide. The KCM employees and contractors are still in the hospital wards,” the source said.

Meanwhile, Zambia Environmental Management Agency corporate affairs manager Irene Lungu Chipili confirmed the incident.

“The Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) would like to inform members of the general public that there was an incident recorded last night, 14th November, 2019 at Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) Nchanga Mine involving an abnormal discharge of Sulphur Dioxide from the Sulphur Burner component of the Acid Plant. This unfortunate incident resulted in a number of people living in the surrounding areas of the plant being affected by the emissions. Preliminary information made available by KCM indicates that some people have been hospitalised,” said Chipili.

“As an immediate action, the Acid Plant has been shut down to facilitate investigations into the circumstances regarding this discharge and ZEMA has since dispatched Inspectors to Chingola to

carry out detailed investigations into this incident. Further regulatory action will be undertaken in line with provisions of the environmental management Act No. 12 of 2011 ("EMA")."