



International Aluminium Institute
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For Immediate Release

Global aluminium industry reacts to catastrophe in Hungary

The global aluminium industry is shocked and saddened by the tragic loss of life and injury to people and property as a result of the disaster unfolding in Hungary's Veszprem, Gyor-Moson-Sopron and Vas counties.

“Our first concern is for those who are directly affected by this event, caused by a breach in the bauxite residue containment area of the Ajka alumina refinery”, said Secretary General Ron Knapp of the International Aluminium Institute (IAI), the global association for aluminium and alumina producers.

“We have sought further information to identify where our member companies could be able to provide technical support and assistance to MAL associated with this - and to the local and national authorities in Hungary, if requested. If necessary, we will seek the availability of technical experts to complement the staff and experts available from MAL and local agencies.”

The IAI is not aware of the specific circumstances or conditions at the Ajka alumina facility which is operated by Magyar Alumínium (MAL), a company not involved with the IAI.

Background Note:

Bauxite residue material is the by-product of the Bayer process, an industrial chemical process for refining aluminium containing ores (bauxites) into alumina (aluminium oxide) via digestion with sodium hydroxide (caustic soda). Alumina is the raw material for production of aluminium metal and has important uses in the ceramics and pharmaceutical industries.

Bauxite residue material is often described as red mud due to the colour of the original bauxite ore and the iron oxide it contains. The unexpected and sudden discharge of a large volume of this material would have the same disastrous impact as any mud slide or dam burst, subject to local geography. The residue normally has an elevated caustic content (i.e. a pH of between 10 and 12) although refineries try to recover as much caustic soda as possible during post-processing treatment to be able to reuse this valuable material in the alumina production process.

About the International Aluminium Institute (IAI):

The IAI is the global forum of aluminium producers dedicated to the development and wider use of aluminium as a competitive and uniquely valuable material. The IAI in all its activities supports the concept that aluminium is a material that lends itself to improving world living standards and developing a better and sustainable world environment. The IAI reflects the aluminium industry's wish to promote wider understanding of its activities and its responsibility of approach on questions of environmental protection, public health and safety in the workplace.

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