

Anglesey Transformer Fire Articles

Fire in Anglesey smelter power transformer

RedOrbit, TX - 06/18/08

Kaiser Aluminum (KALU) announces that on June 12 Anglesey Aluminium Metal Ltd., 49% owned by KALU, suffered a significant failure in the rectifier yard that resulted in a localized fire in one of the power transformers. Some capacity has been taken off line for safety and operational reasons. The smelter is currently operating at 1/3 of its total capacity of 145,000 tons, and it is not yet clear how long it will take to restore full production.

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No plans to axe jobs at Anglesey Aluminium

Daily Post, UK - 06/18/08

STAFF at an aluminium smelter which suffered a major fire last week will find out today how they will be affected by the blaze. Key meetings will take place at the Anglesey Aluminium Metals plant near Holyhead, said managing director David Bloor.

While one of the two production lines, pot line 2, remains out of action the other will be restored to full capacity within the next three weeks. Firefighters were called to the smelter last Thursday night after fire broke out in a transformer.

Since the blaze production at the plant, which is jointly owned by Rio Tinto and Kaiser Aluminum, has been cut to a third while an investigations are carried out. Mr Bloor said: "Pot line 1 is operational and running at about half capacity at present. "We will restore it to full capacity production within the next two to three weeks. Pot line 2 is not operational and before that can be restored we need to understand why the transformer failed. The transformer is extensively damaged and from our point of view is a vital piece of kit. "We have to ensure it is safe to switch it back on again and that process may take time."

The 540 employees at the plant will learn today how the blaze has affected them but there are no plans at present to reduce the numbers.. Mr Bloor added: "Staff have been re-deployed to other duties. We are taking advantage of training and maintenance windows that were simply not available to us this time last week. We are getting the plant painted and tidied and looking good. "Staff will be advised of our plans at meetings today but there are no plans to reduce the workforce." Customers had been advised of the plant's current difficulties, he said. He said: "We are in close contact with our customers regarding the reduction in production capacity."

The transformer ignited 40,000 litres of oil and the burning fuel sent clouds of black smoke pouring from the plant, which then swept across the A55 and neighbouring roads. Fire crews from Holyhead, Rhosneigr and Caernarfon spent three hours tackling the blaze with foam and water. Police officers were drafted in to close minor roads and direct traffic on the A55 as fire crews fought the blaze in the 132 kilowatt transformer. No one was injured in the blaze.

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'Race against time' to save Anglesey Aluminium

Daily Post, UK - Jun 14, 2008
Owen R Hughes

THE FULL effect of a blaze at Anglesey Aluminium was revealed last night as it emerged the plant came within minutes of a critical shutdown. Bosses confirmed the power was cut off for four hours during the inferno on Thursday night – putting the entire production operation, which employs 500 workers on the island, at risk. The situation was close to disaster as extended loss of power to the smelter could have dealt a fatal blow to the plant, causing aluminum to solidify in the smelter pots.

Anglesey Aluminium managing director David Bloor yesterday described a "race against time" to get the smelter back up and running. He said it would take days to assess the full extent of the damage at the site, which employs 500 island workers. Production will continue at a reduced one-third capacity over the weekend, and there are no guarantees of a quick fix.

It emerged that the power stoppage saw temperatures drop below the 900 degrees Celsius needed to keep the smelter process running. The scale of the damage could leave a hefty repair bill – although managers last night said they had escaped the worst case scenario of a complete shut-down.

This could have put a question mark over Anglesey Aluminium's future, which is already in the balance with the failure to secure a power deal beyond 2009. Anglesey Aluminium managing director David Bloor said: "We are now assessing the effect that shutting off the power for four hours will have and the long term consequences. That is an ongoing investigation and at this stage we do not know the answers. The issue now is getting the plant operational.

"The power had to go off to both pot lines for four hours between 7.15pm and 11.15pm. It was a race against time, that is right at the limit and we are now assessing the damage having the power off has done. "It is a painstaking process. We will do this bit by bit over the next few days and the recovery will continue. "We will see where we stand then. Each pot needs to be checked before we can evaluate the damage."

The fire broke out on Thursday evening in a 132 kilovolt transformer supplying the works and spread to 40,000 litres of transformer oil. Five fire engines and one foam carrier from Caernarfon were used to contain the blaze, which saw thick smoke billow over the A55 at Holyhead. Mr Bloor said: "The power had to be shut off to make the area safe so that the fire could be tackled. "We had to put health and safety first. Water, foam and electricity are not a good mix. "The earliest time we could restore power was four hours later."

The plant began operating in 1971 and employs more than 500 workers but its future has been in doubt as its power deal with Wylfa nuclear power station ends next year. Island MP Albert Owen said: "This was a serious incident that was managed well. This just highlights the importance of a continuous supply of electricity to the plant." Deputy first minister AM Ieuan Wyn Jones said: "I was very concerned to hear about the fire at Anglesey Aluminium. My department has been in close contact with the company, and I was glad that they were able to confirm that no-one was injured during the incident. "The main concern now is to ensure that the company can resume

full operations at the earliest opportunity. "It is too early to speculate on what impact the fire will have on production at the plant, but officials from my department are working closely with the company to ensure any disruption is minimised."

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Pots are large carbon or graphite lined steel containers arranged in lines and heated to a temperature of 900 centigrade in which alumina, an intermediate raw material derived from bauxite, is reduced to aluminum metal. Anglesey Aluminium has two pot lines, each running 158 pots. The plant uses around 13% of Wales' total energy consumption and last year it produced 148,000 metric tons of primary aluminum. It is owned by the Rio Tinto Group and Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp. The plant produces finished products that include 500 kilogram ingot, extrusion billet and rolling ingot aluminium. The company has an annual turnover of £130 million.

DJ Anglesey Aluminum Output Cut To Last About 3 Months-Rio Tinto

Trading Markets (press release), CA - Thursday, June 19, 2008

The U.K.'s Anglesey aluminum smelter is expected to operate at about one third of its production capacity for around three months due to a fire in one of the power transformers, a spokesman for its joint owner Rio Tinto PLC (RIO.LN) told Dow Jones Newswires Thursday.

"We are continuing to investigate the cause of the fire and are working to restore full production as soon as possible, which we estimate to be about three months," Nick Cobban said.

Anglesey, which is located in Holyhead, North Wales, has an annual production capacity of 145,000 metric tons. Rio Tinto has a 51% stake in the plant with U.S. aluminum producer Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corporation (KALU) owning the remaining 49%.

According to Cobban, there are two potlines at the plant - one is operating at approximately two thirds capacity and the other is shut down. The curtailment is for safety and operational reasons while the company works to restore stability.

Anglesey is one of the largest suppliers of aluminum metal in the U.K.

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