



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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DEQ FACT SHEET

Information on alumina plant operations in light of the recent incident in Hungary

- The only active alumina site in Louisiana is the aluminum refinery operated by Noranda Aluminum Corporation in Gramercy along the bank of the Mississippi River. As part of our routine oversight, DEQ inspected the facility last week and found no areas of concern at the site.
- Four sludge ponds are present at the site, which cover approximately 920 acres and contain red mud, which is comprised of the discharge from the plant's operations. Only two of the ponds receive waste at any given time; when in the idle mode, the ponds are dewatered to stabilize the red mud. The ponds and the facility are currently in compliance with DEQ regulations.
- An accident such as the incident in Hungary would be highly unlikely to occur in Louisiana, given our lack of mountainous geography, our topography and the stringent guidelines that are in place at the Noranda facility. Louisiana's predominantly low-lying geography makes it very difficult to produce the type of energy mass that occurred in the mountainous region of Ajka, Hungary, and facilitated the event.
- Levees with steep walls are less stable than those built with gradual inclines. The clay levees present at the Noranda site contain four sludge ponds which were designed and built at a three-to-one grade. This design offers proper stability and height in order to best manage and contain the sludge.
- Coupled with the safeguards present in the levee design, the facility's water removal operations also offer protection. These measures were put to the test during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Gustav in 2008. In the wake of those events, Noranda was able to handle the rain and wind impact to both the levee and the plant.
- Information on the Gramercy Alumina plants is available through the DEQ's Electronic data Management System. You will need the Agency Interest number for the facility to look up public records pertaining to this facility. The number is 32828.