



The Lead Education and Abatement Design Group
Working to eliminate childhood and foetal lead poisoning
by the year 2012 and to protect the environment from lead
ABN 25 819 463 114

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Contamination of La Oroya – Peru

La Oroya is a small town of about 35,000 people situated 176 km north-east of Peru's capital – Lima; and is considered one the “World's Worst Polluted Places” according to the Blacksmith Institute's 2007 report due to the smelter that has been operating since 1922, now owned by Doe Run Peru.

Dr. Godofredo Arauzo, a doctor working for the Health Ministry of Peru (now member of The LEAD Group's Technical Advisory Board), contacted The LEAD Group through our web page asking for additional information and raising the case of La Oroya Community.

Dr Arauzo wrote: “In La Oroya City near Huancayo is a smelter that is eliminating [emitting] 2,500 tons every day of lead and the children have in average 350% more lead in them blood that is permitted and the mother in one research have 200 µg/100gr to placenta and the newborn in average 200% lead in them blood.”

Furthermore, “The Inter American Association for the Environment (AIDA) says that the environment quality of La Oroya has seriously been damaged since Doe Run took over, and the company itself states that the heavy metal gas concentrations have increased in the air: Lead, 1,160%, Cadmium, 1,990%, and Arsenic, 606% (Portugal C y Cols [Portugal C and Cols], 2003)”

According to Victor Belaunde, Doe Run Corporate relations manager, the comments stated by Dr Arauzo lack support and veracity. Mr Belaunde says: “While pollution levels still remain high, it is expected that the current programs and investments will be effective in controlling exposures to lead in the near future.”

“Doe Run Peru has substantially expanded its financial commitment and the scope of the environmental projects. Doe Run Peru estimates that its total environmental investments when the upgrade program is completed will exceed US\$ 400 million, quadrupling the original commitment. To this end, Doe Run Peru is re-investing the entirety of its profits and has deferred any dividends or like payments until after the environmental projects are satisfactorily completed.”

But Dr. Arauzo disagrees, he says: “There hasn't been any decrease in the air concentration of lead in La Oroya; in Huanchan such concentration is above 15 times the level permitted; in the months of January and February, 2007, it was an excess of 245% above the allowed level in Huanchan station; in 2006 the cadmium concentration exceeded 48 times the levels allowed by the WHO, lead production increased by 25%.”

“Doe Run monitors only specific sources; it does not monitor the toxic agents that are emitted through the 95 small stacks, neither it monitors the extract deposits and arsenic of Vados and Malpaso, as it does not monitor either the elimination coming from the industrial incinerator and the coke plant that was emitting 23,800 cubic meters per day of toxic gases.”

The full story has been web-published in LEAD Action News Volume 9 Number 2 at:
www.lead.org.au/lanv9n2/LEAD_Action_News_vol_9_no_2.pdf
www.lead.org.au/lanv9n2/LEAD_Action_News_vol_9_no_2_Spanish.pdf

Contact: Bert Pereira, The LEAD Group, mobile +61 433 678 529 ###