
Kennecott to upgrade molybdenum processing facility

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Kennecott Utah Copper is preparing to take advantage of the current demand for molybdenum by building its own Molybdenum Autoclave Process facility. Construction of the new facility is expected to begin in the fall and should be complete by June 2010, with the first products available by November 2010.

Rio Tinto, the parent company of Kennecott Utah, will invest USD 270 million in the construction of a 250,000 square foot multi building facility just north of the Kennecott refinery, located west of Magna in what once was known as Garfield. The new MAP facility will be built on approximately five acres along Highway 201. It will consist of an autoclave, a leaching area, a purification area, a crystallization area and a drying, packaging and warehousing area. The facility will also include an office building, a laboratory and a maintenance facility.

The MAP design includes a number of energy conservation features and an environmentally responsible technique for producing molybdenum products. A steam recovery system will be included to capture excess steam from the autoclave for use in downstream processes. The recycle system will supply about 40% of the plant's thermal requirements and emit significantly less sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide by processing molybdenum concentrate through MAP.

In the new MAP facility, will be able to produce a higher quality of molybdenum by using a new process that was created by KUC. The new facility will have the capacity to produce 30 million pounds of molybdenum per year.

Mr Doug Stauffer project manager of the new facility said that "The benefit of the plant is that we improve recovery so we will be able to retrieve more molybdenum from our current resource. We will be able to produce a higher purity material and we will also be able to produce a metal called rhenium, which is an additional metal that we don't current produce."

During the past five years molybdenum typically a byproduct of copper production and used in metal alloy to enhance toughness, high temperature strength and corrosion resistance in steel has increased in price going from about USD 3 per pound in 2004 to more than USD 30 per pound in today's market.

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