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Emissions, Effluents, & Waste—Approach

The Alcoa Business System recognizes that all wastes are costs that don't directly contribute value to our business. Obviously, some of those wastes generated add to the environmental impact of our operations.

Alcoa has long held the position that wastes should be minimized. Since establishing our 2020 goals, we have made considerable progress toward the reduction of key environmental emission or generation rates. These include, from a baseline of 2000, significant reductions in volatile organic compounds (VOCs), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and the volume of waste disposed in landfills. Additional focus will remain on our goals for similarly reducing SO2 and mercury emissions.

As discussed in the Material Use section, we continue to make progress in converting a significant waste from our smelting process—spent pot lining—into an energy and mineralizer resource for cement kilns. As is the case in any innovative initiative, some outlets for our material have experienced difficulties in maintaining performance criteria we've established, which accounts for the decline in recycled volume in 2006 discussed later in this section. However, we remain committed to working through these interim challenges to ultimately eliminate this material as a waste stream. We will be pursuing a similar strategy around the residue from our bauxite refining process.

While our ultimate goal is to eliminate the waste created, we very closely manage the wastes we do generate, using modern technology for discharge treatment and control. We also maintain a very robust environmental compliance tracking system that ensures rapid corrective action of any upset conditions and best practice sharing to ensure that all of our operating locations minimize the potential for unacceptable impacts to the environment.

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