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Giant can't afford to cut SO₂ emissions

by Alan Taylor
Northern News Services

Giant mine sulphur dioxide emissions are going to be dispersed, instead of reduced, said Royal Oak's environmental manager Larry Connell.

Dispersion is the only economical way to improve air quality, even though it still won't meet air quality recommendations, Connell said.

to actually reduce emissions would require installing millions of dollars worth of equipment, he said. "We would have to rebuild the back end of the processing plant. It has to be through dispersion." The only other

Mine taking steps to improve local air quality

way is cutting down the amount of ore processed, and that's not economical either, he said.

Possible dispersion methods include:

- increasing the height of the mine's roaster stack.

- raising the temperature of the gas so it goes higher in the atmosphere.

- increasing exit velocity of gases coming through the stack.

A report just released by Renewable Resources about Giant's emissions says even if all three methods were used at once, emissions would be still be over the recommended level.

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But Connell said "we're only talking about a period of time where we're over (the guidelines)."

Predictions in the report, based on a computerized model, say the average concentrations for a 24-hour period would be over the desirable level under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act for 10 months of the year.

"I think the computer modelling done is accurate," Connell said.

Connell said that Royal Oak, while staying economically viable, is eager to work

with Renewable Resources to get emissions as low as possible. "They're satisfied that we're acting in a responsible manner."

An investigation was requested under the NWT Environmental Rights Act by Chris O'Brien and Kevin O'Reilly, two Yellowknifers who are active in local and global environmental organizations.

"There is a need for air quality regulations in the North, not just guidelines," O'Reilly said. He's a spokesman for the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee.

Connell said Royal Oak is continuing research so it will know how to maximize the dispersion when changes are made to the stack.