

Peru's Doe Run subsidiary loses environmental certification

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LIMA, Peru: An independent auditor has suspended the environmental certification of the Peruvian affiliate of St. Louis-based Doe Run Co.

The company's certification was suspended last month, two years after it was granted, Doe Run Peru spokesman Victor Andres Belaunde said Wednesday.

Doe Run operates a smelter in Peru's central Andes that processes copper, lead, zinc and smaller amounts of gold, silver and other metals. La Oroya, where the smelter is located, is considered one of the most polluted places on earth.

The certification by Cologne, Germany-based TUV Rheinland is not required for Doe Run to operate in Peru. But it could affect the company with regard to its customers, who often require their suppliers to hold such certification.

"It's a mark that the company is serious about environmental performance," said Perry Gottesfeld, executive director of California-based Occupational Knowledge International, an environmental organization. "It tells stockholders that (the company) adheres to certain environmental practices."

In an unrelated action, the Peruvian government has given the company until next year to complete an emergency clean-up plan to alleviate toxic emissions near the smelter.

Studies conducted by the company, Peru and the St. Louis University

School of Public Health have detected elevated levels of heavy metals in town residents, particularly children.

Company-run evaluations show that by the end of last year, Doe Run had drastically reduced pollution in La Oroya, including a reduction in lead, arsenic and cadmium levels in the town's air, Belaunde told the AP.