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## Worsley Alumina Refinery under investigation after Pinjarra dust cloud



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Worsley Alumina Refinery: South32 site under investigation.

An environmental investigation is underway after a dust cloud engulfed Pinjarra last month, with an alumina refinery 90km away earmarked as the potential source.

Windy weather on May 24 led to high levels of dust blowing through Pinjarra town centre.

A Department of Water and Environmental Regulation spokesman confirmed the incident and said the Worsley Alumina Refinery, 20km north west of Collie, was under investigation.

“The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation was made aware of the dust emissions from the Worsley Alumina Refinery due to windy conditions on May 24,” he said.

“A DWER officer attended the site on the day.

“DWER has received a formal notification under section 72 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (which is a requirement when there has been a discharge of waste).

“The Department is currently investigating.”

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety director Andrew Chaplyn said workers’ safety was paramount.

“The Department was made aware of the excessive dust emissions from the Worsley Alumina Refinery – two officers attended the site to assess the situation,” he said.

“Worsley Alumina Refinery management has implemented controls to reduce the risk to workers on site from the dust and there has been no reported illness to date as a result of the dust emissions.”

Perth-based mining company South32 turns mined bauxite into white alumina powder at the site.

A South32 spokesman contested whether the Pinjarra dust cloud originated from the Worsley refinery and said the company had not received any community complaints due to the event.

“Due to severe weather on May 24, we did experience excess airborne dust at our Worsley refinery,” he said.

“We worked with our employees, neighbours and other stakeholders in the community to minimise any impact, which was exclusively to the south of our operations.

“Given the northerly winds on the day, and the distance between our refinery and Pinjarra, it is highly unlikely that airborne dust from our operation could have reached Pinjarra.”