A Day in the Life of a Site Operations Manager

By Keith Davies, Site Operations Manager, JBR Recovery Ltd

08.00

Arrive, log in to security, review overnight activities with security, check status of security cameras, change clothing and proceed into the production plant.

JBR, based in West Bromwich, UK, is a leading smelter and Good Delivery refiner of 999 silver, but also processes some Au and PGM metals.

The materials processed are from secondary waste sent for recycling and can be anything from low-grade paper, wet sludges, ashes, liquids and metallics, including Non Good Delivery bars and fine silver grain for recasting. Some of the materials can be quite difficult to cope with and can cause a few issues with housekeeping. I will need to check this out later because we have a routine Environment Agency (EA) inspection later this morning.

Grab a cup of coffee, check overnight and early morning emails, respond to the most important, delete the spam and file the rest for later. Check today's planned production schedule and the expected material receipts booked in for today.

Most important job of the day – the site tour – goods inwards, sampling, incineration, smelting, cupellation, refining and bullion areas. Housekeeping looks good – at least the shift operators are doing their bit! During the site tour have stand-up briefings with the Shift Supervisor and Refinery Supervisor – review overnight/weekend production activities and incidents. Discuss today's production requirements, hanges to procedures and let the supervisors know about site visitors. Obtain feedback on proposed and recent changes for discussion later with the Operations Director and other managers. Refinery – it's a bullion despatch day – ensure the Refinery Supervisor and Production Controller are ready to check bar weights, issue weight lists and assay certificates.

We're due to start recasting a recent delivery of another refiners' NGD bars today, but we haven't yet received the assay reports from the Lab for deleterious elements. I'd heard a rumour that the ICP had broken down yesterday!

Laboratory – chase the Lab Manager for assays from trial samples from overnight smelter production. The Inductively Couple Plasma-Atomic Emission Spectrometer (ICP-AES) is out of action, engineer is due tomorrow; what is it with these machines? At least the old Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometers (AAS) are still churning out some results.

Engineering Manager – discuss what repairs are scheduled/ongoing and if any plant is out for preventative maintenance? The annual summer shutdown is only a couple of months away; how are preparations going for the annual maintenance repairs and plant modifications ?

Discuss any issues with the Production Manager, particularly incineration and sampling (any witnesses in today, what plant and operators will be required, is any material likely to cause any deviation from our routine sampling procedures). Touch base with the Operations Director.

09.30

Time for a coffee. The last one is still on my desk – cold! Got to get silver production plan spreadsheet prepared for issue to Commercial

department in readiness for discussion at the lunch-time senior management meeting.

10.00

Scheduled visit by an EA inspector - meeting with the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Manager, Operations Director and self.

SHE Manager accompanies the EA inspector on a routine site inspection. But I'm on standby to respond if any issues are raised by the EA inspector during the tour.

11.00

We're making changes to the smelter operating parameters – brief meeting with the Operations Director to discuss results to date and the proposed next stage.

Follow-up meeting before the EA inspector leaves. The inspector has requested more information on a proposed new process we have been working on that is a departure from our normal line of business. Trying to diversify our processes under PPC (Pollution Prevention and Control) can be very slow –all changes and trials have to be agreed and authorised in advance.

12.00

Despatch of 999 GD bars – check weights and strapping, and oversee security operation.

13.00

Senior management meeting – review latest news about customers, (Commercial department wants to change production priorities yet again), new material, production





plan, HR issues, update from the morning's meeting with the EA inspector, discuss the latest increases in the cost of furnace coke.

Usual outcome of this meeting – another six jobs to add to my 'To do list! – along with the sandwiches and indigestion!

14.30

Unexpected visit from a key supplier of raw materials. He is advising significant price increases, which are not acceptable, so this is going to lead to more work to try and find an alternative supplier.

15.00

Prepare for an internal audit, ISO 14001. An external audit is scheduled for next month.

16.00

A training session is planned for tomorrow for several shift operators. Liaise with the SHE

Manager, who is running the session, about timetable and content.

17.30

Discuss plant status with the Engineering Manager; is all set for the night shift? Discuss contingency plans and back-up if any plant is only temporarily fixed.

Discuss furnace (smelting) operation with the Shift Supervisor and confirm what we want the night shift to do.

17.00

Prepare shift log book – leave instructions for the night shift.

17.30

Notify security of scheduled visitors and vehicles for tomorrow. Set security alarm systems, change, shower, set off for home. It's been a busy, but interesting, day! Kettle's on and the dog's waiting to go for a walk. The night Shift Supervisor calls to say that a smelter operator has phoned in sick. Discuss contingency options and make note to discuss the attendance record of this operator with his manager in the morning.



Keith Davies

joined John Betts Refiners (as it was then) in May 1984 as an analytical chemist for several years for Foseco. Promoted to Laboratory

Manager in October 1985, Keith eventually transferred to a production operational role in April 1991, and in September 1996, was appointed Site Operations Manager.

If you are interested in taking part in the "Day in the Life of..." series, please contact: amy.berman@lbma.org.uk