

Lucite International places MMA customers on sales control

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Major European Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) producer Lucite International has placed its customers on sales control, with effect from 17 June, because of an unplanned outage, a source from the company said on Tuesday. The company said an imminent shutdown was required to resolve a technical issue at its Cassel site, in northeastern England.

"Lucite has no option but to implement a sales control on MMA, Methacrylic acid [MAA] and n-Butyl Methacrylate [NBMA] from its Cassel site to its customers and to allocate available volume on a fair and reasonable basis, and in compliance with contract commitments," the company said in a letter to its customers.

The allocation will remain in force for an initial period until 31 July 2013, the company said. Lucite said it would keep its customers informed of the progress being made during the outage.

An MMA buyer told ICIS: "It is severe, and we will be significantly impacted."

A major consumer of acetone for the production of MMA said that because of technical problems it will be taking less volume in July. The source said: "Because of technical issues, we will be reducing acetone purchasing. We will take what we have ordered for June, but due to the technical issue, we will be reduced in July."

Europe June MMA contract prices rolled over, but some players expect to see price rises in July. "We have had more enquiries," one MMA seller said. "The July price is going to go up. The European balance is going to be significantly affected because a big plant is having severe problems."

UK-based Lucite International has the capacity to produce 200,000 tonnes/year of MMA from its Cassel site, based in Billingham, Teesside.

Nearly all MMA is polymerised to make homopolymers and copolymers, with the largest application being the casting, moulding or extrusion of Polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA) or modified polymers. PMMA is a transparent thermoplastic, often used as a lighter, shatter-resistant alternative to glass.

SOURCE *ICIS News*