

Solidarity wants ArcelorMittal order revoked

The trade union Solidarity on Wednesday (20 February) appealed to the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to withdraw an order issued last year against ArcelorMittal South Africa (Amsa) to switch off its electric arc furnace at its Vanderbijlpark plant.



Operations at this plant have largely ground to a halt after a fire broke out at a basic oxygen furnace at the plant earlier this month.

Deon Reyneke, head of Solidarity's metal, engineering and electrical sector, urged the department to withdraw its order to enable Amsa to at least resume operations at the Vanderbijlpark plant, preventing further job losses.

"Amsa is currently engaged in discussions with the Department about the possibility of withdrawing the order. Solidarity supports Amsa's request and asks that the process be treated as urgent," Reyneke said.

Meanwhile, Solidarity says it is encouraging that Amsa has started a process to redeploy employees elsewhere within the ArcelorMittal Group.

"For employees such a process goes hand in hand with disruption and if the arc furnace is switched on again, it could limit the disruption and would enable employees to retain their current jobs," the trade union stated,

Reyneke said the fire had broken out earlier this month after molten steel started running uncontrollably from a basic oxygen furnace.

"The molten steel ran into the immediate vicinity, causing several fires. It caused major damage and a long recovery process will now have to be followed to get that section of the plant operational again. Three Amsa employees were treated for smoke inhalation after the incident," he said.