



World Refractory Association - COVID 19 Position Statement

The Role of Refractories as an Essential Industry

March 27, 2020

### **WRA: REFRACTORIES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR DAILY LIVES**

*Safe and responsible operations need to continue*

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic, the temporary closing of non-essential businesses and other efforts to keep COVID-19 from overwhelming hospital and healthcare facilities are creating challenges for many countries and across many industries. Governing bodies must keep essential businesses open that support health systems operations and guarantee public safety and national security. Refractories should be recognized as a critical industry that must continue to operate.

### **REFRACTORIES: VITAL TO INDUSTRY**

Refractories play a critical role in the daily operations of almost every sector of manufacturing. These ceramic materials are essential for all heat-intensive production processes. Without refractories, important industries and the products they produce would not exist. Whether it is the ambulances we drive, the hospitals we use, the roads we rely on, the medical equipment that we need, the communications tools we use, the waste we need to incinerate, or the medicines we take, the world we know would not exist without refractories.

In the context of COVID-19, our customers in the steel, aluminum, copper, glass, chemicals, energy, waste management and pulp & paper industries are directly responsible for supplying the primary materials used to produce desperately needed items such as hospital beds, ambulances, respirators, face masks, and other medical devices. Their production processes cannot occur without refractories, even in the short term.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY ARE INDUSTRY PRIORITIES**

We must continuously produce refractories because they are critical components in almost all products' supply chains. At the same time, our top priority is, and always has been, the safety and well-being of our industry employees and the communities in which they operate.

Because the refractory industry is globally connected through WRA, from the earliest stages of the COVID 19 threat, refractory manufacturers have been proactive in taking extra precautions to ensure the health and safety of all those who work in our industry. This includes complying with all recommendations and directives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and all national, regional, and local organizations in response to COVID 19. Refractory industry

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employees who can work remotely are doing so. In facilities that must continue to produce refractories, the highest COVID 19 safety and hygiene protocols are fundamental to manufacturing operations. These include, but are not limited to, social distancing measures, continual sanitizing and disinfecting of workplaces, use of proper personal protective equipment (PPE), and minimization of staff interactions.

Refractories will always be an essential industry that is vital to the manufacturing of countless goods that ensure the safety and security of our global community. As governing bodies across the globe continue to assess industries, the refractories industry must be placed within this essential business category.

#### ABOUT THE WORLD REFRACTORIES ASSOCIATION

World Refractories Association is a forum to debate regulatory issues affecting global trade, circulate aggregated industry statistics, and promote the interests of the worldwide refractory industry. It also serves as a counterpart to other world industry organizations. The WRA currently consists of six major refractory industry associations and 16 multinational companies. Visit WRA at <https://www.worldrefractories.org>.

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