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Proposed closure of the R134a fluorogas activity on the Pierre-Bénite site

The R134a market in Europe is set to undergo an inevitable decline from 1st January 2017 following regulatory changes affecting fluorinated gases for automotive air conditioning taking effect on that date. In this sharply declining market, Arkema has decided to put forward to the Central Works Council today a project for the closure of the R134a fluorogas plant at its Pierre-Bénite site (France). This proposed closure would not result in any redundancies.

The Pierre-Bénite site specializes in the manufacture of fluorinated products for wide-ranging applications. It produces the R134a fluorogas in particular, and so has to adapt to the scheduled ban on the use of this gas for automotive air conditioning in Europe.

Pursuant to European Directive 2006/40/EC, also known as the MAC (Mobile Air Conditioning) Directive, designed to reduce CO₂ emissions, the use of R134a will be banned on all new vehicles from 1st January 2017 in favor of more environmental friendly gases. This market represents the main outlet for Arkema's R134a business in Europe.

This background leads Arkema to consider the shutdown of its R134a plant.

The closure of this activity would require a reorganization of the fluorogas plant in order to adapt the site's structure to its new scope of operations while also improving the competitiveness of the activity.

This reorganization would entail the loss of 38 positions. However, the proposed new structure would not result in any redundancies as redeployment solutions will be made available to those employees concerned.

Following this plant closure planned for first quarter 2017, the Pierre-Bénite site would refocus on the production of fluorogases, fluorinated blends and derivatives for the stationary air-conditioning, refrigeration and non-emissive uses markets, as well as the manufacture of fluoropolymers and certain catalysts.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Gilles Galinier +33 1 49 00 70 07

gilles.galinier@arkema.com

Véronique Obrecht +33 1 49 00 88 41

veronique.obrecht@arkema.com

INVESTOR RELATIONS CONTACTS

Sophie Fouillat +33 1 49 00 86 37

sophie.fouillat@arkema.com

François Ruas +33 1 49 00 72 07

francois.ruas@arkema.com