

State environmental panel fines Newmont

The Nevada Environmental Commission has approved a \$50,000 negotiated fine against Newmont Gold Co., the largest gold producer in North America, for violating air quality standards during 1988 and early 1989.

The \$50,000 fine follows an \$88,000 fine Newmont agreed to pay in January for violating air quality rules by spewing too many suspended dust particles in the air, said Tom Porta of the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

Porta said the fines, which will be paid to the Eureka County School

District, are so large because they involved emission violations.

The commission approved lesser fines of \$1,000-\$5,000 against three smaller mining companies.

Willie Molini, chairman of the environmental commission and chief of the state's Wildlife Department, said he didn't want the state to recommend such a large fine against Newmont just because the multimillion dollar firm has the ability to pay. The company made \$16.5 million net income during the first quarter of 1989 from \$108.3 million in gold sales.

But Porta said the fine was warranted because Newmont, which operates primarily in the Carlin area, practically ignored rules to monitor the moisture content of ore, which dictates how many dust particles are released in the air.

During 1988, Porta said Newmont violated the ore moisture content requirement on 177 days and failed to conduct required moisture tests on another 67 days. That means the company violated or possibly broke air quality rules during about two-thirds of the year.

Since then, Porta said Newmont has installed \$1.2 million worth of equipment at its mining operation to ensure the company doesn't violate air quality standards in the future.

Nevada mines agree to pay more state fees

RENO (AP) — Nevada mining companies will pay as much as \$160,000 a year in new fees to improve the state's policing of toxic mining ponds and other water works under action taken Thursday by the state Environmental Commission.

Rod Higgins, executive director of the Nevada Mining Association, said the \$3 billion-a-year state industry has agreed to the extra levies, partly to assure prompt state approval of permits for such ponds.

"We have worked together on this fee structure and the mining industry supports it," Higgins told commission members.

"The state is understaffed now and that's not good for anybody," he added later. "We're all trying to work together on any problems."

The state environmental division currently has three employees to inspect mining ponds that contain cyanide used to separate minerals from ore. If the ponds leak, the dead-

ly chemical can seep into the water table, threatening the health of plants, wildlife and people.

With the new fees, another five state employees will be hired to review permits more promptly and reduce a waiting list for final approval, which now can take as long as three years, according to the state.

"We've got too many mines operating on temporary permits, and I don't think it's fair to a company to keep them on hold like that," Higgins said.

Higgins said the 1989 Legislature also tapped the mining industry for \$750,000 in fees to be paid during the next two years to fund the state's first mining reclamation program.

"We really have been hit by quite a few fees this year along with the higher taxes," Higgins said.

The tax on minerals in the state was increased this year to a maximum 5 percent of net proceeds to raise another \$52 million during the next two years.

It didnot take the mines long to learn that it was cheaper for the mines to give the bureaucrats everything they wanted than to have their whol process held up by delays, fines and permits denials.