

Mineral Industry Surveys

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BISMUTH IN FIRST QUARTER 2009

Bismuth consumption in the United States for the first quarter of 2009 was estimated to be 290 metric tons (t), which was 35% lower than that of the fourth quarter of 2008, and 62% lower than that in the first quarter of 2008. Preliminary figures for bismuth imports in 2008 totaled 1,930 t compared to 3,070 t in 2007. For 2008, China, Belgium, and the United Kingdom were the leading suppliers of bismuth to the United States.

The price of bismuth drifted lower in the first quarter of 2009. The New York dealer price for bismuth, as published in Platts Metals Week, started January 2009 at \$8.50 to \$9.50 per pound and decreased during the first quarter to end March 2009 at \$7.50 to \$8.75 per pound.

Met-Mex Penoles S.A. de C.V. (Torreon, Mexico), a significant bismuth refiner declared *force majeure* on its lead and precious metals processing in March owing to a strike that

began in February over a wage dispute. Because of an oversupplied world bismuth market, analysts believed that the *force majeure* would not affect bismuth prices (Metal Bulletin, 2009).

Update

On May 21, 2009, the Platts Metals Week price for bismuth was \$6.75 to \$7.75 per pound.

Reference Cited

Metal Bulletin, 2009, Bismuth too weak to take support from force majeure: Metal Bulletin, no. 9090, March 23, p. 10.

TABLE 1
SALIENT BISMUTH STATISTICS¹

(Kilograms unless otherwise specified)

	2008					2009
	Year ^r	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	First quarter
Consumption ²	2,360,000	773,000	588,000	553,000	443,000	290,000
Exports ³	375,000	64,100	135,000	84,600	91,200	110,000
Imports for consumption	1,930,000	601,000	472,000	396,000	457,000	186,000
Price per pound, dealer, average of period	\$12.11 ^r	\$13.43 ^r	\$14.65 ^r	\$11.42 ^r	\$9.55 ^r	\$8.31
Stocks, end of period, consumer	228,000	140,000	175,000	159,000	139,000	233,000

^rPreliminary. ^rRevised.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

²Estimated, based on net imports.

³Comprises bismuth metal and the bismuth content of alloys and waste and scrap.

TABLE 2
ESTIMATED BISMUTH METAL CONSUMED
IN THE UNITED STATES, BY USE¹

(Kilograms)

Use	2008		2009
	Year ^b	First quarter	First quarter
Chemicals ²	1,250,000	435,000	164,000
Bismuth alloys	56,200	15,500	18,800
Metallurgical additives	938,000	307,000	102,000
Other	108,000	15,300	5,090
Total	2,360,000	773,000	290,000

^bPreliminary.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits, may not add to totals shown.

²Includes industrial and laboratory chemicals, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

TABLE 3
U.S. EXPORTS OF BISMUTH METAL, ALLOYS AND WASTE AND SCRAP, BY COUNTRY¹

(Kilograms, metal content)

Country	2008	2009			First quarter
		January	February	March	
Argentina	8,340	22	--	--	22
Belgium	--	--	--	10,600	10,600
Brazil	28,400	7,270	--	--	7,270
Canada	55,100	2,090	1,040	773	3,900
China	3,210	--	--	1,540	1,540
Colombia	3,120	--	--	1,230	1,230
Costa Rica	2,130	--	--	--	--
Czech Republic	3,400	--	99	--	99
Dominican Republic	8,950	--	665	--	665
France	13,600	--	--	35,200	35,200
Germany	3,380	113	50	--	163
Hong Kong	1,730	--	--	1,610	1,610
Israel	3,490	--	--	--	--
Japan	4,460	--	--	--	--
Mexico	76,400	7,400	13,700	4,750	25,900
Saudi Arabia	1,470	--	--	--	--
Singapore	8,680	--	100	--	100
Thailand	25,500	--	2,560	547	3,110
United Kingdom	101,000	--	--	--	--
Vietnam	18,400	7,240	4,890	6,650	18,800
Other	3,580	--	140	51	191
Total	375,000	24,100	23,300	63,000	110,000

-- Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF BISMUTH METAL, BY COUNTRY¹

(Kilograms)

Country	2008	2009			First quarter
		January	February	March	
Belgium	509,000	30,300	372	20,000	50,700
Canada	18,500	--	1,030	1,220	2,250
China	998,000	31,100	35,800	29,800	96,700
France	23,100	--	--	--	--
Hong Kong	93,500	--	--	--	--
Kazakhstan	--	9,850	--	--	9,850
Mexico	40,000	--	--	--	--
Peru	55,700	--	--	--	--
Russia	--	3,200	--	3	3,200
United Kingdom	186,000	5,000	13,800	4,010	22,800
Other	2,180	--	50	160	210
Total	1,930,000	79,500	51,000	55,200	186,000

-- Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.