

Karlovacka investigated following

tragedy

Katka Krosnar on April 03, 2007 | 123 times read

Heineken's Karlovacka brewery has been closed down by Croatian authorities after a local man and his dog died after apparently being poisoned by CO₂ gas emitted by the brewery into a nearby stream.

Zdravko Martinović, 64, was found unconscious close to Karlovačka Pivovara in the Croatian town of Karlovac. Martinović was rushed to hospital in a coma and died on 19 March.

Heineken has confirmed that five brewery employees are being investigated by the county prosecutor as part of its formal investigation into the incident.

"As part of the investigations into the cause and responsibilities for the incident involving Mr Martinović, our technical staff at the brewery have been working with local authorities and police. We have also been conducting tests to assess the compliance of the brewery with all relevant laws and regulations," said Heineken spokeswoman Nathalie Grotenhuis.

"During internal investigations we discovered indications that CO₂, a natural by-product of the fermentation process, was discharged into the sewerage system rather than into the atmosphere. We informed all relevant authorities and took immediate corrective action. We continue to work with the authorities to understand any relevance this may have to the investigation. It is for that reason that we cannot exclude any possibilities relating to this," she added.

According to Croatian newspaper *Jutarnji List*, the CO₂ had been released into the sewage system instead of being processed within the brewery with management's approval since last November.

Following a temporary halt in fermentation requested by the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, the brewery launched a test phase with the aim of securing the necessary certificates that will allow it to operate normally again.

"We are fully supplying our customers and are dedicated to acquiring all necessary permits for normal brewing operation. Karlovačka Pivovara is co-operating fully, transparently and thoroughly with all parties. We are committed to a responsible approach to business and, if at the end of the investigation, any liability is assigned, we will, of course respect our legal obligations," said Grotenhuis.

"This is clearly a difficult time for the family and friends of Mr Martinović and we have both publicly as well as directly to the family expressed our deepest sympathy for their loss," she added.

Heineken acquired a majority stake in Karlovacka in April 2003. Karlovacka is Croatia's second largest brewery and the country's biggest beer exporter.

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