

WBR ARTICLE

Wyoming soda ash production drops in 2009

By Staff

February 8, 2010 --

GREEN RIVER — A year-end report by the U.S. Geological Survey shows soda ash production dropped in Wyoming in 2009. That's the first drop in five years, which is widely blamed on competition from China and the global recession.

The Cowboy State produced some 10.9 million tons of soda ash last year, down from 11.3 million tons in 2008.

Wyoming produces about a quarter of the world's total soda ash production.

Soda ash is used in glass, soaps and detergents, as well as for some industrial chemicals.

Dennis Kostick, a soda ash analyst with the U.S. Geological Survey, said Wyoming's biggest problem on the world stage is the cost of transportation, moving the product by rail to coastal ports and then by ship. In contrast, China's state-run soda ash industry has low transportation costs, not to mention lax pollution regulations and cheap labor.

Kostick said the estimated total value of domestic soda ash produced last year was about \$1.4 billion.

Two Green River producers, OCI Wyoming and FMC, reduced their work forces in 2009 by about 100 employees, he said.