

Mineral Industry Surveys

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PLATINUM-GROUP METALS IN MARCH 2011

Engelhard's average March prices of platinum and rhodium decreased by 3% and that of palladium decreased by 7% compared with the average February prices. The average monthly price of iridium increased by 11% from that of February, and the price of ruthenium remained unchanged during the same period. Platinum, palladium, and rhodium prices decreased sharply during the first half of the month before increasing toward the end of the month. The price decreases were in response to continuing political unrest in the Middle East and to a severe earthquake and tsunami in Japan on March 11. Rising oil prices and expected reduced automobile demand also had negative impact on the prices of platinum, palladium, and rhodium because those metals are mainly used in automobile catalytic converters. The iridium price decreased toward the end of the month as a result of reduced buying interest, following a nearly unbroken upward trend that began in January 2010.

Duluth Metals Ltd. (Toronto, Ontario, Canada) and Franconia Minerals Corp. (Spokane Valley, WA) completed their previously announced plan, by which Duluth acquired all of the shares of Franconia that it did not already own. Franconia's assets were rolled into Twin Metals Minnesota LLC (St. Paul, MN), which is a Duluth (60%) and Antofagasta plc (Santiago, Chile) (40%) joint venture. The transaction consolidated the land holdings of Twin Metals in the Duluth Complex, and included the Spruce Road, Nokomis, Maturi, and Birch Lake copper-nickel-platinum-group metals (PGM) deposits (Duluth Metals Ltd., 2011).

Anglo Platinum Ltd. (Johannesburg, South Africa) shipped the first platinum concentrate from its Unki Mine in Zimbabwe. The shipment marked the opening of the mine following development work that began in 2003. Anglo Platinum planned to increase production to 137 kilograms per month of platinum and to reach 4,670 kilograms per year (kg/yr) in the near future. No specific timeframe was given. Anglo Platinum planned to change the name of its company to Anglo American Platinum Ltd., with trading under the new name starting on April 20 (Johnson Matthey plc 2011a, b).

Wesizwe Platinum Ltd. (Johannesburg) planned to implement a financing transaction among Wesizwe, Jinchuan Group Ltd.

(Jinchang, Gansu Province, China), China Africa Development Fund (Beijing, China), and Micawber 809 (Pty) Ltd. (Johannesburg), the latter of which was formed to boost black participation in Wesizwe. The transaction provided funding to start construction of the Frischgewaagd-Ledig PGM project. The Jinchuan Group and the China Africa Development Fund would take a 45% stake in Wesizwe, and Micawber would take a 6% stake. Mine construction was expected to take 5 to 6 years. Early production was expected in 2017, and full-scale production of about 11,000 kg/yr of PGM was anticipated in 2020 (Wesizwe Platinum Ltd., 2011).

The Zimbabwe Government moved forward with plans to require foreign-owned companies worth more than \$1 to sell 51% stakes in the company to locals. Mining companies were required to draw up plans by May 9 on how they will transfer ownership, and the process must be completed by September 25. The Zimbabwe Government had been threatening for more than 5 years to take over foreign-owned mining companies. Shares in the major companies involved in mining platinum in Zimbabwe fell on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in response to the news (Platts Metals Week, 2011).

Colossus Minerals Inc. (Toronto) purchased a ball mill and related equipment in preparation for planned PGM production at its Serra Pelada deposit in Para State, Brazil. Colossus finalized plans to extract an initial 2,500-metric-ton (t) bulk sample from the upper portion of the central mineralized zone to characterize the mineralization. The company anticipated that two additional 2,500-t bulk samples would be extracted in 2012 from the middle and lower portions of the central mineralized zone. The company planned to begin phase 1 production in 2012 (Colossus Minerals Inc., 2011).

References Cited

- Colossus Minerals Inc., 2011, Colossus Minerals purchases ball mill and announces plans to extract 2,500 tonne bulk sample at Serra Pelada: Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Colossus Minerals Inc. news release, March 7, 1 p.
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Platts Metals Week, 2011, Shares fall as Zimbabwe targets miners: Platts Metals Week, v. 82, no. 14, April 4, p. 3.

Wesizwe Platinum Ltd., 2011, Wesizwe Platinum shareholders overwhelmingly approve the Chinese consortium investment, and the company's AGM successfully concluded: Johannesburg, South Africa, Wesizwe Platinum Ltd. news release, March 9, 3 p.

TABLE 1
PLATINUM-GROUP METALS PRICES¹

(Dollars per troy ounce)

	Platinum	Palladium	Rhodium	Iridium	Ruthenium
2010:					
Low/date	1,482.00 Feb. 8	397.00 Feb. 5	2,120.00 Aug. ²	420.00 Jan. ²	170.00 Jan. ²
High/date	1,790.00 Nov. 9	800.00 Dec. 30 and 31	2,975.00 Apr. 15 and 16	780.00 Dec. ²	245.00 Apr.-Jun. ²
Average	1,615.56	530.61	2,459.07	642.15	198.45
2011:					
February:					
Low/date	1,778.00/24	774.00/24	2,425.00 ²	865.00/1 and 2	180.00 ²
High/date	1,863.00/9	851.00/18	2,500.00 ²	1,075.00 ²	180.00 ²
Average	1,828.68	823.47	2,475.00	960.53	180.00
March:					
Low/date	1,702.00/17	706.00/15	2,375.00 ²	1,050.00 ²	180.00 ²
High/date	1,860.00/2	824.00/2	2,425.00 ²	1,075.00 ²	180.00 ²
Average	1,773.26	766.48	2,396.74	1,064.13	180.00
Year-to-date:					
Low/date	1,702.00 Mar. 17	706.00 Mar. 15	2,375.00 Mar. ²	780.00 Jan. 3 and 4	180.00 Jan.-Mar. ²
High/date	1,863.00 Feb. 9	851.00 Feb. 18	2,500.00 Jan. 31 and Feb. ²	1,075.00 Feb.-Mar. ²	180.00 Jan.-Mar. ²
Average	1,797.52	795.81	2,436.45	946.87	180.00

¹Quotes from Engelhard.

²Occurred multiple days in month(s) listed.

Source: Platts Metals Week.

TABLE 2
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF PLATINUM METAL, BY COUNTRY¹

(Kilograms metal content, unless otherwise specified)

Period and country	Platinum grain and nuggets		Platinum sponge		Other unwrought platinum		Platinum, other		Platinum waste and scrap		Platinum coins	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
		(thousands)		(thousands)		(thousands)		(thousands)		(thousands)		(thousands)
2010:												
December	65	\$2,990	1,840	\$98,400	170	\$7,770	254	\$10,100	13,000	\$60,200	10	\$782
Year	644	16,700	31,700	1,590,000	3,790	151,000	4,650	183,000	111,000	565,000	46	2,760
2011:												
January	74	3,900	2,860	157,000	2,590	11,800	253	9,230	12,200	44,800	--	--
February:												
Argentina	--	--	--	--	3	208	--	--	--	--	--	--
Australia	--	--	--	--	--	--	(2)	11	--	--	62	3,680
Belgium	--	--	60	3,530	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Bolivia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	977	99	--	--
Brazil	--	--	16	777	--	--	(2)	6	30	982	--	--
Brunei	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	85	4,910	--	--
Canada	(2)	4	--	--	--	--	25	1,110	181	6,340	--	--
Colombia	--	--	--	--	109	5,150	--	--	12	175	--	--
France	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	59	1,580	--	--
Germany	(2)	3	203	10,600	2,540 ³	5,340	269	9,350	305	15,700	--	--
Italy	--	--	222	13,300	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Japan	--	--	8	462	18	583	1	16	311	14,200	--	--
Jordan	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	315	--	--
Korea, Republic of	--	--	--	--	1	16	--	--	29	1,330	--	--
Malaysia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	947	1,430	--	--
Mexico	--	--	--	--	23	1,350	--	--	--	--	--	--
Norway	--	--	78	4,370	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Philippines	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	184	--	--
Singapore	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	234	11,100	--	--
South Africa	--	--	2,610	89,400	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Switzerland	--	--	(2)	35	--	--	(2)	7	--	--	--	--
United Kingdom	13	594	268	15,900	1	18	8	323	88	4,420	15	394
Other	--	--	--	--	1	22	1	56	17	150	--	--
Total	13	601	3,470	138,000	2,700	12,700	303	10,900	3,290	62,900	78	4,080
Year to date	87	4,500	6,320	296,000	5,290	24,500	557	20,100	15,500	108,000	78	4,080

-- Zero.

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

²Less than ½ unit.

³All or part of these data have been referred to the U.S. Census Bureau for verification.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF PLATINUM-GROUP METALS, BY COUNTRY¹

(Kilograms metal content, unless otherwise specified)

Period and country	Unwrought palladium		Palladium, other		Iridium ²		Osmium ²		Ruthenium ²		Rhodium ²	
	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)
2010:												
December	4,230	\$91,100	899	\$21,500	448	\$7,160	--	--	1,240	\$6,840	723	\$51,800
Year	64,400	990,000	6,310	122,000	3,530	65,900	76	\$612	14,100	82,500	12,800	914,000
2011:												
January	4,920	118,000	908	25,200	261	5,610	--	--	1,110	5,320	1,150	79,200
February:												
Belgium	460	11,900	--	--	--	--	--	--	156	880	98	7,570
Canada	--	--	77	2,340	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Germany	814	21,400	621	380	35	229	--	--	--	--	111	8,000
Hong Kong	20	526	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Italy	341	7,930	15	385	8	231	--	--	--	--	52	4,300
Japan	367	5,540	(3)	9	5	124	--	--	--	--	10	812
Norway	157	4,040	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	240
Russia	819	21,900	391	10,300	--	--	--	--	--	--	98	7,610
South Africa	1,300	33,300	162	4,370	372	9,000	--	--	1,140	6,440	761	56,500
Switzerland	465	12,500	7	243	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
United Kingdom	342	9,090	23	640	1	46	--	--	90	521	1	69
Other	3	56	9	140	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	5,080	128,000	1,310	18,900	421	9,630	--	--	1,390	7,840	1,130	85,100
Year to date	10,000	246,000	2,210	44,000	682	15,200	--	--	2,500	13,200	2,290	164,000

-- Zero.

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

²Unwrought and other forms.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF PLATINUM-GROUP METALS, BY COUNTRY¹

(Kilograms of metal content, unless otherwise specified)

Period and country	Platinum ²		Platinum waste and scrap		Palladium ²		Iridium, osmium, and ruthenium ^{2,3}		Rhodium ²	
	Value		Value		Value		Value		Value	
	Quantity	(thousands)	Quantity	(thousands)	Quantity	(thousands)	Quantity	(thousands)	Quantity	(thousands)
2010:										
December	924	\$41,000	4,740	\$178,000	3,510	\$39,100	84	\$567	215	\$15,900
Year	16,900	775,000	38,200	1,100,000	38,100	419,000	3,720	36,800	2,320	136,000
2011:										
January	892	42,200	3,880	137,000	2,840	25,100	41	618	63	4,430
February:										
Australia	(4)	98	--	--	114	847	1	8	--	--
Austria	3	39	--	--	3	57	--	--	--	--
Belgium	2	53	404	2,440	1	4	--	--	76	4,140
Brazil	10	528	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Canada	18	544	4	124	289	5,600	5	93	(4)	12
China	2	100	41	2,170	181	2,160	147	934	11	1,290
Colombia	1	30	--	--	3	66	--	--	--	--
Czech Republic	--	--	--	--	102	134	--	--	--	--
Denmark	--	--	--	--	7	129	--	--	--	--
Dominican Republic	4	31	--	--	(4)	5	--	--	--	--
France	2	41	--	--	39	394	1	4	--	--
Germany	573	32,800	21,500	7,630	335	4,780	--	--	50	3,960
Hong Kong	6	276	--	--	47	839	--	--	--	--
India	26	1,550	--	--	8	109	1	10	--	--
Ireland	16	516	--	--	14	28	2	13	--	--
Israel	3	64	--	--	299	1,670	--	--	--	--
Italy	(4)	35	--	--	111	1,660	--	--	--	--
Japan	66	1,270	163	5,580	59	1,380	(4)	10	17	1,970
Korea, Republic of	21	1,130	--	--	378	497	(4)	6	--	--
Liechtenstein	(4)	9	--	--	(4)	5	--	--	--	--
Mexico	33	1,150	--	--	14	98	2	72	--	--
Netherlands	(4)	37	2	7	2	56	--	--	--	--
New Zealand	(4)	7	--	--	24	152	--	--	--	--
Norway	2	60	--	--	2	52	--	--	--	--
Philippines	1	65	--	--	1	40	--	--	--	--
Romania	(4)	4	--	--	2	22	--	--	--	--
Saudi Arabia	--	--	--	--	5	104	--	--	--	--
Singapore	(4)	7	--	--	68	249	14	329	--	--
South Africa	(4)	18	11	900	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spain	--	--	--	--	33	203	--	--	--	--
Sweden	2	80	--	--	1	4	--	--	--	--
Switzerland	32	1,770	237	6,000	610	15,000	--	--	--	--
Taiwan	6	220	--	--	143	2,150	24	133	--	--
Thailand	(4)	9	--	--	3	59	--	--	--	--
Turkey	2	117	--	--	1	5	--	--	--	--
United Kingdom	36	1,720	1,960	87,200	165	2,040	64	1,670	--	--
Other	(4)	49	--	--	4	40	--	--	--	--
Total	870	44,500	24,300	112,000	3,070	40,600	260	3,280	154	11,400
Year to date	1,760	86,600	28,200	249,000	5,900	65,700	301	3,900	218	15,800

-- Zero.

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

²Unwrought and other forms.

³Gross weight.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.