



Audi site Neckarsulm tests sustainable water cycle

Neckarsulm, February 24, 2021 – Audi is committed to the responsible use of resources. In the environmental program “Mission Zero”, the company therefore not only has its sights set on the decarbonization of its production sites, but also on the water supply for the plants. The Neckarsulm location aims to produce wastewater-neutral by 2025 and relies on a closed water cycle with the sewage treatment plant of the association “Unteres Sulmtal” adjacent to the plant. Before the cycle and the associated construction of a new water supply system in the plant can start, Audi tests the process with a pilot facility.

“In addition to the avoidance of CO₂, sustainable water use plays a key role within the context of our Mission Zero program. With this treatment plant in close proximity to the location, we have a unique setup that we can take even more systematic advantage of in the future,” explained Achim Diehlmann, Head of Operational Environmental Protection at the location and the project leader for Mission Zero. Starting in 2025 at the latest, water for the entire plant will be run through a closed circulation system. “Then our production at the location will be wastewater-neutral,” Diehlmann said.

A new water-supply facility will go online by 2025, creating a closed water cycle between the Audi plant and the sewage treatment plant. Before construction on the new facility starts, the process will be tested extensively with the pilot facility in the northern area of the plant. To that end, test pipes were laid to run the water from the treatment plant’s final inspection area to the pilot containers and back again. In the container, the water is treated for use in production with the help of filter systems and membranes. In the process, the facility continually measures the water quality. On top of that, a laboratory analyzes the water’s properties every two weeks. “If everything works out and the water consistently meets our required values, we can start on construction of the new water-supply facility at the end of 2022,” the responsible project manager, Christian Forelle, said.

The Neckarsulm plant is supplied with around 600,000 cubic meters of water for production every year – this is equivalent to about three million bathtubs. The water currently comes from the Neckar Canal. A facility from the year 1964 processes it for its special use in production. The proximity to the city’s treatment plant has been taken advantage of in the past as well. For instance, the factory has had a direct wastewater line from the paint shop to the treatment plant for years so that the wastewater is fed directly into the plant rather than first into the sewer system.

Audi is bundling all activities and measures to reduce the ecological footprint in production and logistics in the environmental program “Mission Zero”. The focus is on the central challenges of decarbonization, water use, resource efficiency and biodiversity for Audi. A central goal is to have production sites that are carbon-neutral by 2025.

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