

Continental Tire Plant Enables CO2-neutral Production



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CO2-neutral production process being tested in mega-plant in Lousado, Portugal with a production capacity of more than 18 million tires per year

- An innovative electric boiler can generate steam from green electricity instead of gas
- By 2040 at the latest, Continental wants to switch production in all tire plants to CO2-neutral
- Dr. Bernhard Trilken, Head of Manufacturing and Logistics at Continental Tires:

In Lousado, we are demonstrating that even very large tire plants can achieve CO2-neutral production

- The UltraContact NXT, the most sustainable series tire to date, is produced in Lousado

Hanover/Lousado, Germany/Portugal, May 16, 2024. Since this year, Continental can produce tires CO2-neutrally at its tire plant in Lousado, Portugal. The tire manufacturer has thus taken an important step towards its goal of completely CO2-neutral production. This is possible thanks to the generation of steam using an boiler, that operates entirely on electricity. Continental uses both self-generated solar power and renewable electricity from the power grid for its steam generation. Before, natural gas was used as sole energy source for steam generation at the Lousado tire plant. In the tire industry, a large proportion of the energy consumed is used to generate steam, which is needed to heat the tires, a process known as vulcanization. The thermal energy turns the raw rubber into flexible and elastic rubber. With an annual production capacity of 18 million tires, the plant in Lousado is a mega plant. By 2040 at the latest, Continental wants to switch all tire plants completely to CO2-neutral production processes.

In Lousado, we are demonstrating that even very large tire plants can achieve CO₂-neutral production. To do so, the availability of renewable energy sources at competitive prices is crucial,

explained Dr. Bernhard Trilken, Head of Manufacturing and Logistics at Continental Tires. He added:

We are preparing all our plants so that they can use as much renewable energy as possible. The commissioning of our electric steam boiler in Lousado is the start of an exciting learning curve.

The new electric steam boiler converts solar and other green electricity into steam with almost no losses. Water is pumped from the bottom of the boiler to the top, where it is sprayed onto electrodes. Electric current flows through the water jets and creates heat inside the water until it evaporates to steam.

Mixture of different sources to ensure stable and more sustainable processes

A conventional gas boiler will continue to be available in addition to the new electric steam boiler. This allows Continental to react flexibly to the fluctuating availability of renewable energies and other environmental factors.

Our site in Lousado benefits from the fact that the sun shines frequently. This enables us to achieve fully electrified and CO₂-neutral tire production process whenever possible,

said Pedro Carreira, Head of the Continental Tires plant in Lousado, Portugal. He added:

All Continental tire plants are working intensively on making production more and more sustainable and energy efficient. We each have to cope with a very wide variety of conditions, such as weather conditions or the availability of renewable energy sources.

In Lousado, the sun shines for an average of seven hours a day. In winter, the average is four hours. For comparison: in Berlin, the sun only shines for 1.8 hours a day in winter.

Worldwide emission-free energy generation in Continental tire plants

As a result of years of efforts, Continental Tires has reached an industry-leading position when it comes to energy consumption per metric ton of tires produced compared to the industry average. This is the result of a Continental-internal benchmarking exercise with the average energy consumption of the world's leading tire manufacturers, as reported by the Tire Industry Project of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. In 2023 alone, Continental's tire division reduced its annual energy requirements by a total of around 150 gigawatt hours thanks to 160 energy-saving projects. This was achieved by such measures as for example thermal insulation. This is roughly equivalent to the average annual electricity supply of 12,500 single-family homes.

The ambition of Continental Tires by 2030 is to reduce its energy consumption by 20 percent versus 2018. Continental is aiming to achieve climate-neutral production by 2040 at the latest. Since the end of 2020, the electricity that the company purchases for all locations worldwide has already been sourced from renewable energy sources and is climate neutral. For this purpose, guarantees of origin are obtained in accordance with the criteria of the global RE100 Initiative.

Lousado: a site with a long history looking ahead to the future

In addition to the UltraContact NXT, the most sustainable series tire to date, tires for cars, agricultural machinery and off-road vehicles are manufactured at the location in Lousado. With more than 30 years of history in Portugal, Continental is a reliable partner that values its history and is committed to innovation in both tire manufacturing and automotive technology.

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