

AUTOMOTIVE

Audi celebrates World Water Day with new environmental goals

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Audi Mexico plant is the first production site to produce vehicles without wastewater. Image credit: Audi

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

German automaker Audi is planning to cut water consumption in production by 50 percent by 2035, as clean drinking water is one of the most valuable resources in the world.

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Through its Mission:Zero environmental initiative, the automaker plans to keep its own water consumption to a minimum and stop using drinking water in vehicle production. Audi will begin rolling out new processes and closed water cycles, as well as increasing its use of recycled rainwater.

"Our aim is to drastically reduce our freshwater consumption and cut the water consumption per produced vehicle in half by 2035," said Peter Kessler, board member for production and logistics at Audi, in a statement. "Where possible, we are already using recycled water that has been used multiple times in the cycle and treated.

"Our vision is to have closed water cycles at all our production sites," he said.

Clean water initiative

More than two billion people worldwide do not have regular access to clean water, according to Audi's statement. The **United Nations** estimates that the demand for drinking water may increase by 55 percent by 2050.

In order to prioritize water conservation measures in a targeted manner, Audi uses a site-specific water value that puts the water withdrawal at the locations in relation to regional availability. Taking the regional circumstances into account allows measures to be implemented in areas where water is particularly valuable.

By doing this, Audi hopes to reduce ecologically weighted water consumption in production from 3.75 cubic meters to 1.75 cubic meters per produced car within the next 15 years.

Audi Mexico is the company's first production site to produce vehicles without any wastewater since 2018. A biological treatment facility with a downstream ultrafiltration and reverse osmosis system collects the wastewater generated in production, purifies it and feeds large quantities back into the plant's water cycle.

The location uses the treated water as service water, in production or to water the green spaces on premises.

Clean drinking #water is one of the most valuable resources worldwide: This is why #Audi has included the #sustainable use of water as a key aspect in its Mission:Zero environmental program. Find out about achievements and goals>> <https://t.co/ZTPOGggNKa> #WorldWaterDay pic.twitter.com/pgIpG8MSHR

Audi (@AudiOfficial) March 22, 2021

At the Neckarsulm site, a closed water cycle will be established between the plant and the neighboring public treatment facility of the Unteres Sulmtal wastewater association. Before the cycle and the associated construction of a new water supply facility can start, Audi is testing the procedure with a pilot facility.

The water that returns from the treatment facility is fed into a container in the northern part of the plant premises, where it is treated for reuse in production by means of filter systems and membranes. The water quality is checked continuously throughout this process, which includes a laboratory analysis to determine properties of the treated water every two weeks.

If testing proves successful, construction of the water supply facility will begin in 2022.

Since 2019, a water supply center has been in use at the Ingolstadt site since 2019.

The facility treats wastewater in three stages before it can be reused as service water in production: it passes through a chemical facility that neutralizes alkaline and acidic elements and removes heavy metals; then enters the membrane bioreactor where the production water is mixed with sanitary wastewater and organic components are removed; finally, the purified wastewater is reintroduced into the water cycle as process water.

While deliveries were down about 8 percent from pre-pandemic levels, Audi Group fared better than the global automotive industry, which experienced a delivery decline of nearly 15 percent. During the 2020 fiscal year, the automaker experienced a strong second half to propel its sales revenues to more than 49.9 billion euros, or about \$59.5 billion at current exchange rate ([see story](#)).

Britain's Bentley Motors has also made strong progress in reducing production-related environmental impacts.

Water usage for vehicle production at Crewe has fallen, with savings of about 150 bathtubs full of water for each Bentley. This has been helped in-part by installation of onsite water recycling systems ([see story](#)).