



Fully automatic pickling line in Saint-Florentin

A large step forward

The new fully automatic pickling line in st Florence was commissioned in May, after a period of planning and work that lasted 18 months. The investment of over 15 million represents a large step forward and brings with it progress in the areas of health protection and environment.

This huge investment was intended to remove any residues polluting wastewater and reduce risks for employees. When the line was destroyed by fire in September 2006, the company decided to build an ultra modern pickling line. The amount invested 15 million only covers the acquisition and commissioning of the new line. We must add the costs of the pickling operation of tubes which was temporarily outsourced and performed by the Plant in Vitry and sub contracting firms, "said Xavier Vollat, human resources manager at St Florentin. The fully automatic surface treatment line is fascinating. It is controlled from a separate control room so that now no one is directly in contact with hazardous materials in production.

Fumes from the treatment are sucked in, scrubbed and discharged to the outside. Pickle is recycled and re-used as much as possible. Residues are collected automatically in containers, and then removed by a specialized company. The chemicals used, purchased from another supplier, have a longer life-span. Water consumption has been reduced by approximately 50 000 cubic meters per year.

Satisfied customers

"At the beginning, the operators were skeptical about operating the line," said the Quality Manager, Mechanical Unit, Corentin Lorc'h. "But the whole team is starting to become familiar with this new, complex and performing tool. Our customers are satisfied with the first productions.

It is true that computer-assisted control of the pickling line only requires 7 people instead of 12 previously

The new tasks assigned to them and for which they had specific training, are however more difficult. Other employees have been transferred to other stations in the plant.

"The staff was very involved during this difficult period, by agreeing to work in other plants or different hours. Those who participated in fitting the equipment after the fire were very motivated." Reports Jen Claude Coste, Head of Technical Services and Environment Department. "Many even worked at weekends. As a result, we were able to put the facility into service in record time of 18 months. "