

VISION ZERO

The Importance of Leadership in Sensitive Work Environments

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PRACTICE



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Authors

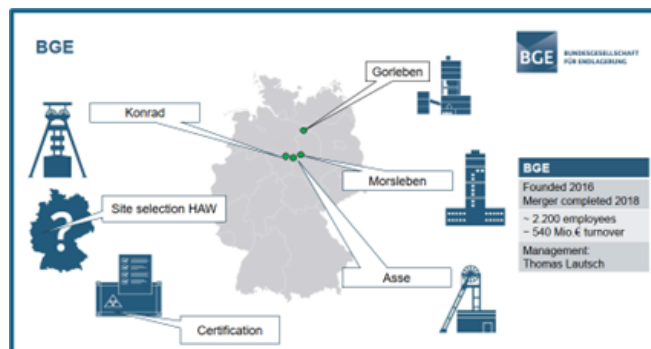
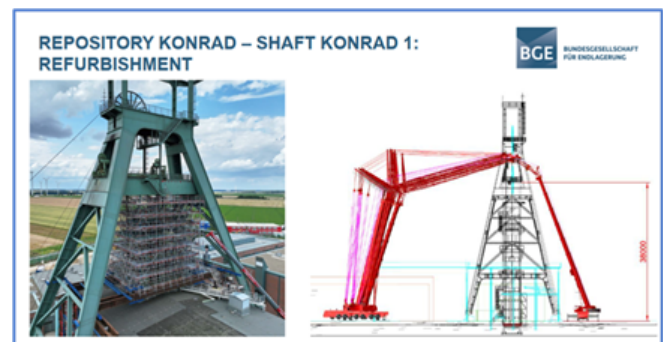
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The Bundesgesellschaft für Endlagerung mbH (BGE) is the federal company for radioactive waste disposal in Germany. As well as being responsible for the final disposal of low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste, the BGE is searching for the site that offers the best possible safety for a million years for high-level radioactive waste in Germany in accordance with the requirements of the Repository Site Selection Act.

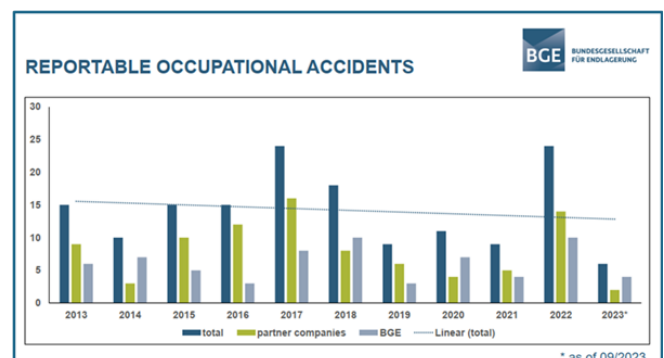
The BGE operates repository projects in particularly challenging environments. Our geological repositories are mines and therefore all dangers of underground mining apply, including handling heavy loads in confined spaces, poor accessibility to workplaces, and controlling the rock formation as well as the ventilation for climate and pollutants.



Adding to the challenge, most of the repository mines are old extraction mines, requiring an adaptation of today's construction processes into the old settings. The construction work in the shaft and pit are carried out simultaneously; many interdependencies are to be considered. In addition to the requirements of mining law, the BGE is also subject to the strict requirements of nuclear law.

Occupational health and safety are our most important corporate goals, reaching the VISION ZERO aim. One might wonder, if it is even possible to have zero accidents in such a work environment as described above. In the past, the BGE was able to reduce the number of reportable accidents with increased workforce significantly. We have approx. three accidents per 1 million hours worked. Furthermore, we did have no reportable incidents in the first half of 2023.

The main conclusion is: Although we register an increasing number of employees, a rising amount of work activity and even an increasing number of partner companies, the average number of reportable occupational accidents decreases at all, at least in the past ten years. We are laying our focus on a special contractor management program, which is due to the observed relatively high number of accidents with our partner companies.



Not only do we want our employees to come home healthy every day, but we also want them to retire healthy. For this reason, the BGE has introduced extensive health-promoting measures in recent years, such as health and fitness programs (e. g. training courses for back-health, seminars for handling of stress respectively of quantity of work or time management and arrangement of pause). On the second hand, BGE has introduced a capable occupational health service with installation of necessary examination rooms with the required equipment.

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Two company physicians and two medical technical assistants have been employed for carrying out the examinations. Finally on the third hand we have established a comprehensive program to reduce psychological stress, which includes e. g. both seminars and workshops for leaders as well as measures for teambuilding.

With the establishment of our Vision Zero programme, we now focus more on behavioural causes of accidents. Therefore, the BGE has introduced a very special mindset and culture program regarding occupational health and safety. This program has been developed in close accordance with the general guiding principles of the BGE.



There is a statistical proof, that 80% (Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung, DGUV) of all accidents are caused by behaviour. That is why the culture program focusses on how behaviour can be changed to achieve higher levels of health and workplace safety. Indeed, to reach this goal it all starts with the leaders, role modelling their behaviour.

The following main ambitions are to be obtained with the culture program: Reaching a positive culture of failure, reciprocal respect and assistance, managerial staff is introduced to lead by example (role model), employees are taking care for each other, and they address unsafe behaviour to transform this together into safe behaviour.

After having carried out 46 workshops for all our leaders with a participation quota of more than 90 %, we train behaviour-oriented tours with our teams. Within this program we have introduced tools such as starting every meeting with a safety impulse or carrying out behaviour-based safety-tours by the leaders.

Concluding we must state that Vision Zero is fundamentally possible, corporate culture regarding occupational safety and health is most important (leaders as role models) as well as involvement of partner companies in corporate culture programmes.



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