STEAG registers two power plants in the Saarland for final closure

Decision made after thorough reassessment of economic viability

Essen/Quierschied/Bexbach. Essen-based energy company STEAG today notified the Federal Network Agency of its plan to permanently shut down its two power plant units Weiher 3 and Bexbach in the Saarland. The statutory publication on the transparency platform took place promptly following the notification. Previously, both units had only been registered for temporary shutdown. The deciding factor for the application for permanent shutdown was the shortened operating life for hard coal fired generating units as provided for in the Coal-fired Power Generation Termination Act (Kohleverstromungsbeendigungs-gesetz).

The Coal-fired Power Generation Termination Act (KVBG), which came into force in August last year, regulates the phase-out of coal-fired power generation in Germany. But not by 2038 at the latest, as is the case with lignite, but in principle much earlier in the case of hard coal. "With the exception of the young Walsum 10 power plant unit in Duisburg, we have to expect that our other plants will be shut down without compensation from 2026 at the latest, if they are still on the market then," explains Joachim Rumstadt, Chairman of the Management Board of STEAG GmbH.

The Weiher and Bexbach hard coal-fired power plants in the Saarland have been kept available as grid reserve plants since 2017. “At that time, we assumed that we would be able to offer generation from both plants on the market again at a later date and when conditions were more favorable. With the KVBG coming into force, economic considerations mean we have no choice but to now apply for permanent shutdown for both plants.”

For the time being, both power plants remain classified as system-relevant

Regardless of this, the Weiher 3 and Bexbach plants will, for the time being, continue to be kept available in the grid reserve and can be dispatched by the transmission system operator Amprion to stabilize the power grid if necessary and to ensure security of supply in the region. In the early days of the new year, this was the case on a number of occasions. Last year, the two power plants were

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dispatched a total of 21 times. Nevertheless, the number of operating hours was so low that Weiher and Bexbach would have practically no chance of winning a bid at a decommissioning tender.

Amprion will now check whether the power plants are still system-relevant. The transmission system operator can apply to the Federal Network Agency for an extension of the system relevance status beyond 2022. Only after the end of system relevance may both units be shut down permanently. A total of 230 skilled jobs would then be lost at both sites.

Saarland continues to be an important location for STEAG

"The Saarland will continue to be of particular importance for STEAG," Joachim Rumstadt comments, referring to the projects planned for the future. "At the Völklingen-Fenne site, for example, we want to use the existing infrastructure and develop it into a hub for hydrogen production and sector coupling." For Weiher and Bexbach, he says, there are concepts to develop both locations into centers for special grid-related assets based on natural gas. Large-scale battery systems for providing system services are already located there. In addition, the possibility of installing large-scale ground-mounted photovoltaic systems at both sites is currently being examined.

STEAG remains a strong player in distributed generation and district heating in the Saarland

In the Saarland, STEAG and its partners operate a large regional district heating network, the Fernwärmeschiene Saar. Around 13,500 customers are currently supplied with environmentally friendly district heating. The largest customer is the Ford car factory in Saarlouis with its associated Industrial Supplier Park. STEAG will soon be starting another major project in the region: the Velsen Waste-to-Energy Plant will be upgraded to a combined heat and power plant and connected to the existing district heating network via a connecting pipeline. And with the 170,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of heat extracted every year, the carbon footprint of the Saar region's district heating supply will improve yet again.

In Völklingen-Fenne, STEAG operates one of the world's largest mine gas engine plants to generate electricity and heat. The plants are supplied from the company's own 110-kilometer-long mine gas network. The electricity generated is fed into the public grid under the Renewable Energies Act (EEG) and the heat is supplied to the Saar district heating network.

About STEAG

For over 80 years, STEAG has stood for efficient and reliable power generation, both in Germany and abroad. As an experienced partner, we support our customers comprehensively in all phases of power supply. We design, develop, implement, operate and market highly efficient energy solutions – from distributed generation facilities based on renewable energy sources to large central power plants and recycling of their by-products. Together with customized solutions in the field of electricity and heat supply, we also provide a wide range of energy services – increasingly on the basis of renewables. With success: From 1990 to 2020, STEAG has permanently reduced its own CO_2 emissions by almost 80 percent.