

## **AICHELIN Modernizes SKF Plants in Lüchow, Germany**

Retrofit of 5 Roller Hearth Furnaces Increases Production Reliability and Performance

**Ludwigsburg, 22 March 2023 – SKF GmbH produces different roller bearing products in their plant in Lüchow in Lower Saxony. For the heat treatment of their parts, they have been using AICHELIN plants and services for decades. SKF commissioned AICHELIN Service with an extensive modernization of five of those plants in 2022. With the successful recommissioning of the plants in late December 2022, SKF has fully achieved its project goals: to guarantee production reliability, and to significantly increase productivity.**

SKF has been an AICHELIN customer since the 1980s and has nine AICHELIN roller hearth furnaces for the heat treatment of roller bearings at their Lüchow site. The outdated electronic control system Siemens SPS S5 and hence the necessary conversion to the failsafe Simatic S7-1500 was the reason for this recent plant modernization. SKF decided to combine this upgrade of the control system with further retrofits and modernizations on their plants.

### **Significant Increase of Productivity and Flexibility**

To increase the throughput of parts in the heat treatment plant, AICHELIN constructed a new stacking gantry, in cooperation with the SKF project team as well as with an external partner. This stacking gantry is being used for the first time at SKF and now enables the customer to run two to a maximum of three layers of roller bearings in a single heat treatment process instead of the previous single-layer process. In addition to expanding production capacity, this will also enable SKF to respond more flexibly to additional demand in the future and, above all, to utilize the capacity of the plants in a much more energy-efficient manner. FOCOS 4.0, AICHELIN's Industry 4.0 application for monitoring and verifying the quality of process values, was also newly integrated.



### **AICHELIN Service Manages the Project as General Contractor**

SKF decided early on to have AICHELIN Service plan and execute all the trades involved in the project, thus opting for the specialist expertise of the industrial furnace manufacturer. Having a 'one-stop service' was the decisive aspect: AICHELIN Service acted as general contractor and was responsible for the overall project management as well as the execution of the services of all partners and subcontractors involved. The conditions were challenging for the project partners: Originally, the project was scheduled to run from November 2021 to June 2022 and was considered time-critical because production reliability had to be ensured. The plants were to be converted step by step one after the other. However, due to the widespread supply bottlenecks along the supply chain in the market, there were several months of delivery delays for various parts.

SKF is extremely satisfied with the way this critical situation was handled: "Once again, we worked very efficiently and in partnership with AICHELIN Service. We were able to bridge the delivery bottlenecks through high flexibility on both sides and the use of alternative suppliers, also from our SKF network. It is crucial to communicate openly and purposefully in such phases," confirms the project manager of the Production Support & Heat Treatment division of SKF GmbH.

By increasing its productivity in the field of heat treatment, the SKF site in Lüchow is advancing its competitiveness. What's more, SKF is already in talks with AICHELIN Service for further plant modernizations - among other things to ensure and increase plant safety.

**Caption** (Photos: © AICHELIN Service GmbH / AICHELIN Holding GmbH)



[Photo 001]



[Photo 002]

- Left [Photo 001]: One of modernized and retrofitted AICHELIN roller hearth furnaces. The stacking gantry in the center of the photo is being used for the first time at SKF.
- Right [Photo 002]: The new stacking gantry. It enables a run of two to a maximum of three layers of roller bearings in one single heat treatment process.



[Photo 003]

- [Photo 003]: Back end of the AICHELIN roller hearth furnace.

### **About SKF GmbH**

SKF is striving to become the uncontested market leader in the roller bearings industry. For this, SKF offers solutions which reduce friction and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions while simultaneously increasing machine run time and performance. Their portfolio includes roller bearings, seals, lubrication systems, artificial intelligence and wireless status monitoring. SKF is active in more than 130 countries worldwide, with over 17,000 distribution sites as well as 41,000 employees, 6,000 of whom are in Germany.

[www.skf.com/de](http://www.skf.com/de)

### **About AICHELIN Service GmbH**

AICHELIN Service GmbH in Ludwigsburg, Germany is the competence center for all services regarding AICHELIN heat treatment plants as well as plants by other manufacturers. The Ludwigsburg site also houses the central AICHELIN spare parts depot with the dispatch logistics department and the main scheduling office for service engineers. With around 100 technicians in office and field service, AICHELIN Service supports its customers with services such as spare parts, inspections, preemptive maintenance, modification and modernization, industry 4.0 solutions, but also with trainings and seminars.

[www.aichelin-service.com](http://www.aichelin-service.com)

### **About AICHELIN Group**

As part of Berndorf AG, AICHELIN Group, with its headquarters in Mödling near Vienna, is a leading provider of heat treatment solutions. This includes industrial furnaces, induction hardening plants, industrial heating systems, control and automation systems, Industry 4.0 solutions as well as other services. The company's roots date back to 1868. The long-established brand AICHELIN, as well as AFC-Holcroft, EMA Indutec, SAFED, BOSIO, and NOXMAT, make up the group and together employ more than 1,000 people. AICHELIN Group ranges among the world's top 3 heat treatment companies. AICHELIN's subsidiaries in Europe are located in Austria, Germany, Slovenia, France, and Switzerland; the worldwide presence of the company includes subsidiaries and branch offices in China, India, and the US, as well as a sales network in 22 more countries.

[www.aichelin.com](http://www.aichelin.com)

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