

Volkswagen SA resumes production and exports

Following a gradual ramp-up of its local production, the Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) plant in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape has resumed its manufacturing operations.



Jens Bruecker, production director at VWSA

In line with the regulations pertaining to Level 4 of lockdown, VWSA production was restarted on 4 May, with essential employees returning to work in a phased approach. The company has since started exporting Polos to various markets, in addition to manufacturing Polos and Vivos for the local market. On-site employees are supported by colleagues who continue to work from home where this is possible.

Prior to the gradual ramp-up of production, a number of measures to combat Covid-19 were put in place at all VWSA sites. These measures form part of a 100-point plan implemented across the Volkswagen Group to ensure the health and safety of employees. The plant's on-site Wellness Centre has been equipped and its staff continues to consult with high-risk employees to ensure their wellbeing is prioritised.

Upon their return to work, employees were informed of the new protocols through employee orientation sessions, a detailed booklet and extensive signage installed at all sites and areas. Returning employees were further informed regarding hygiene and physical distancing practices that can further protect them. The company also provided each employee with a set of masks and over 20 tons of hand sanitiser have been sourced for all VWSA sites.

"Our essential services team ensured that the workplace was Covid-19 compliant before we officially restarted production in Uitenhage," said Jens Bruecker, production director at VWSA. "Our 100-point plan is designed to ensure that all employees feel safe and good about their workplace, so we can manufacture and deliver vehicles without compromising our

commitment to the wellbeing of our employees."

"With dealerships being allowed to reopen on a phased basis, VWSA will again be able to meet the needs of its loyal local customer base," said Mike Glendinning, VWSA's Sales and Marketing Director. "Our team has worked remotely during the lockdown to support dealerships in preparing to reopen, and to assist customers through our Customer Interaction Centre. In addition, VW Commercial Vehicle dealerships remained open over the lockdown period to service vehicles for essential services. We look forward to welcoming our customers back to the dealerships, and we are taking every precaution to prepare for this."



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VWSA's chairman and managing director, Thomas Schaefer, thanked Naamsa for its assistance in lobbying with government for the automotive industry to be allowed to reopen. "The automotive industry has a crucial role to play in the local and national economy," said Schaefer. "We are grateful that this role was acknowledged with the decision to let the industry operate and trade again."

"In many aspects, the Covid-19 crisis has eclipsed our daily lives. As such, it must be our main priority at VWSA to act responsibly in every aspect of our business - and this includes, first and foremost, to ensure that our employees can work without risking their health. We will continue our extensive efforts to fulfil this duty," Schaefer concluded.

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