

Press Release

April 20, 2022

Bilfinger intensifies support for the retrieval of radioactive waste from Asse II mine

- **Another strategically important order from Germany's Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal**
- **Development and testing of high-tech machines for the safe recovery and retrieval of over 100,000 casks of radioactive waste**
- **Pioneering work for the recovery of thousands of metal casks from the 750-meter level of the former salt mine**

Industrial services provider Bilfinger is expanding its activities regarding the retrieval of radioactive waste from the Asse II mine in Germany. On behalf of [Germany's Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal](#) (Bundesgesellschaft für Endlagerung – BGE), a team of experts is developing, building and testing special machines that will later be used to safely retrieve thousands of casks of radioactive waste from the 750-meter level of the mine. Bilfinger is thus intensifying its cooperation with BGE with what is now the second order awarded to Bilfinger within just a few months. Bilfinger had already been commissioned by BGE in October 2021 with the [development of the technology for the retrieval of radioactive waste from the storage chambers in the 511-meter level as well as the 725-meter level](#). The runtime for both projects is 4 years each.

“This new order for the challenging project is an important win for Bilfinger. Our safety concept, the expertise of our qualified specialists and the organizational know-how of the Bilfinger Group are the basis for our customer's trust,” says Bilfinger CEO Thomas Schulz. “We cover the entire life cycle of nuclear facilities: From new new-build and modernization to decommissioning and waste treatment. This makes Bilfinger a reliable partner for the nuclear industry.”

As part of the second order, a team from Würzburg-based subsidiary [Bilfinger Noell](#) will work with other industry partners to develop special prototype machines that can later be used to recover the low-level radioactive waste remotely and prepare it for removal. The machines will initially undergo extensive aboveground test before being put into operation safely in the mine.



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Recovery work at the 750-meter level, where most of the radioactive material is stored in eleven chambers, is particularly challenging from a mining and radiological point of view. The deposit is difficult to access and the storage chambers have been partially filled in and sealed with salt grit. Special mining industry regulations apply in addition to the strict conditions of the nuclear sector. This results in particularly stringent requirements for the safety of the machines as well as for fire protection, contamination prevention and documentation of the work steps. The retrieval of radioactive waste from a decommissioned repository is pioneering work and unique in the world.

“We are pleased to expand our cooperation with Bilfinger. We expect that the company's solutions will contribute to the realization of a reliable process for the safe retrieval of radioactive waste in the Asse mine in this technologically demanding project,” says Dr. Thomas Lautsch, Managing Director of BGE.

The Asse II mine is a former salt mine near Braunschweig, Germany, which was tested as a final repository for radioactive waste in the 1960s. Radioactive waste is stored there in 13 chambers on three levels in approximately 126,000 metal casks. In the coming decades, these will be recovered using special machines in order to treat the stored radioactive waste and properly dispose of it in accordance with the current state of the art and legal situation.

Bilfinger has been active in the decommissioning of nuclear power plants and the treatment of radioactive waste for decades. Recent projects include:

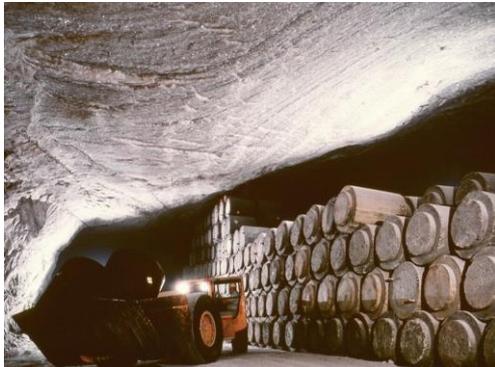
- [Cooperation in the decommissioning of nuclear power plants with Cyclife SAS, a subsidiary of EDF \(Électricité de France\)](#)
- [Support for the design, fabrication and commissioning of one of the world's largest hot cells for the safe treatment and interim storage of spent fuel assemblies from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant](#)
- [Design, manufacture and commissioning of the waste treatment plant and components for two core melt stabilization systems for the new nuclear power plant Hinkley Point C, which is under construction in the United Kingdom](#)
- [Design and implementation of the dismantling of the steam generators in the decommissioned Mülheim-Kärlich nuclear power plant](#)



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The Asse II mine near Braunschweig, Germany
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Radioactive waste was stored in the former salt mine in 1967-1978
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Bilfinger is an international industrial services provider. The Group aims to enhance the efficiency of assets, ensure a high level of availability, reduce emissions and lower maintenance costs. Creating sustainable production processes for customers is becoming increasingly important. Bilfinger's portfolio covers the entire value chain from consulting, engineering, manufacturing, assembly, maintenance and plant expansion to turnarounds and also includes environmental technologies and digital applications.

The company delivers its services in two service lines: Engineering & Maintenance and Technologies. Bilfinger is primarily active in Europe, North America and the Middle East. Process industry customers come from sectors that include chemicals & petrochemicals, energy & utilities, oil & gas, pharma & biopharma, metallurgy and cement. With its ~ 30,000 employees, Bilfinger upholds the highest standards of safety and quality and generated revenue of €3.7 billion in financial year 2021.

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