

Audi Hungary plant begins tooling up after three-week production halt

April 15 2020



Audi will adapt its production line at Gyor in Hungary to respect social distancing rules

The Volkswagen Group's Audi brand restarted operations at its plant in Hungary on Tuesday after halting work last month due to the new

coronavirus pandemic.

Citing a poor sales outlook and uncertainties in component supply, Volkswagen announced on March 17 production halts at plants throughout Europe.

Production was suspended March 22 at its Audi plant in Gyor, 120 kilometres (75 miles) west of Budapest, that employs almost 13,000 people.

In a video posted on a Gyor-based news site late Monday, Audi's local management said it had agreed with Volkswagen to begin preparations Tuesday for restarting full-scale production.

"Now the most important task for the company is to prepare for continuing complete vehicle production despite the critical situation," said Audi Hungary head Alfons Dintner.

"We believe that within a few weeks we can get up and running... Our clients worldwide are waiting for cars. We have to be a reliable supplier," he said.

First operations to restart include maintenance work, and organisational measures aimed at relaunching production lines while implementing anti-virus health rules.

Physical distancing between workers will be enforced, and workstation plexiglass dividers and [personal protective equipment](#) provided where necessary, said the firm.

Buses transporting workers to the plant will be continuously disinfected, it said.

Later Tuesday, other car [plants](#) in Hungary shuttered since late-March also announced plans to restart.

Japan's Suzuki said in a statement it plans to relaunch single-shift production on April 27 at its plant in Esztergom north of Budapest.

German car giant Daimler AG told a Hungarian [news-site](#) that it's Mercedes-Benz plant in Kecskemet, southern Hungary, will restart operations April 28.

Management at PSA's Opel car engine plant in the western town of Szentgotthard also said it is ready to reopen depending on market conditions but did not give a date.

The carmakers' moves came as countries consider lifting sweeping lockdowns that have crippled economies and kept billions confined to their homes.

Italy and Austria, a neighbour of Hungary's, allowed some shops to reopen on Tuesday, a day after Spain allowed construction and factory workers to return to their jobs.

Hungary's nationalist premier Viktor Orban has ordered confinement measures over the pandemic that were extended indefinitely last week.

Hungary, which has a population of almost 10 million, has recorded more than 1,500 COVID-19 infections and 122 deaths.

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