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On 9 June, Oleg Petrov, Technical Director of SGC, delivered a live speech on the corporate Instagram page dedicated to the impact of the pandemic on the company's production activities, plans on the economy and budget items to be sequestered.

Those infected at SGC's power plants

To date, 43 employees of SGC's power plants have been diagnosed with COVID-19. 15 of them have already recovered and resumed their work and 391 people are in quarantine, including 290 employees from the 65+ age category who were isolated at the very beginning.

Two weeks ago, the most adverse epidemiological situation was observed in Krasnoyarsk; today, all territories of SGC's operations are of particular concern. Kuzbass, where the number of new cases is decreasing, looks a little better. Novosibirsk, Tyva and Khakassia still demonstrate a daily increase in those infected.

SGC is still considering an option of quarantining for some power plants because the situation in Siberia is getting worse. The 'Ship' plan, providing for isolation of operational personnel at the plants (or in nearby premises), can be introduced if the number of patients rises even further, and the regional authorities declare a state of emergency.

"We are not separated from the region and will also be forced to switch to an emergency mode. Another case where our power plants can become quarantined objects refers to a manifold increase in infected employees," Oleg Petrov explained. According to him, everything is ready for the 'Ship' mode, including premises for personnel and all required employees and facilities, but he hopes that the worst-case scenario can be avoided.

Oleg Petrov also said that the staff was tired of the current isolation: "From the conversations, one can see that people want to move, work and engage in their favourite activities. But there is no panic or fear."

The pandemic has not affected SGC's major production processes. There are certain inconveniences related to labour management and daily routine, the need for social distancing and regular treatment of premises and workplaces. At some plants, canteens are temporarily closed.

"All these inconveniences do not impact our consumers. 43 turbine units and 68 boilers continue to uninterruptedly produce electricity and hot water," Oleg Petrov added.

'Repairing equipment online is like having lunch over the phone'

SGC's 2020 repair programme will be completed in full. At the beginning of the quarantine, some suppliers sent letters saying that the shipment of products would be postponed to later dates due to the pandemic. SGC's representatives explained to them that the company was engaged in life-supporting activities and that no failures to deliver on time, under the pretence of quarantine, would be tolerated. They attached legislative acts and explanatory government decrees, and all suppliers honoured their commitments. There were only a few isolated and minor failures.

Oleg Petrov noted that problems concerned not only components, but also people, technicians invited from other regions to participate in equipment repairs.

"We cannot use their competencies online. It is like having lunch over the phone. Technicians must arrive at the facility for troubleshooting," explained SGC's Technical Director. Therefore, they are invited in advance, tested for COVID-19, quarantined when necessary and then start their work.

Nevertheless, it will be impossible to operate without any delays and extensions. Because repairmen have not yet arrived at the Novokuznetskaya GTPP, the beginning of the work has shifted. However, as Oleg Petrov believes, this is not a critical situation, but a routine one, and all scheduled repairs at the generating facilities will be completed by the end of summer.

20% accident reduction in 3 months

Over the last three months of isolation, SGC's facilities have recorded the lowest accident rate in recent years. "The total number of accidents has fallen by around 20%, and even twofold at Nazarovskaya GRES in Krasnoyarsk region," Oleg Petrov noted.

According to him, this indicator is only minorly affected by the COVID-19, "because occupational safety has been establishing over the years". Consistent equipment upgrades, along with competent operation, also contributed to such accident reduction.

What to reduce and how to save?

An abnormally warm winter and the onset of Siberian summer one month ahead of schedule have caused a significant underutilisation of generating capacities. According to Oleg Petrov, the average load reduction is 13%. Nevertheless, a unit loaded at 50% or 70% still requires maintenance. This provokes significant financial losses.

However, SGC will not reduce repair costs. "We do not plan to cut them at all, because they are a constant!" he emphasised. The company will save on its facelift. "We have abandoned brushing up, that is, facelifting our buildings and structures," said Oleg Petrov. SGC has curtailed those investment projects that do not have a significant impact on its production activities. This will save approximately 5% of the total investment budget.

The modernisation of equipment that requires imported components has been postponed. Such equipment includes power plant control systems (microprocessor electronics), blowers installed on boilers and some other spare parts.

Yet another cost saving item is the sequestration of the budget for the purchase of chemicals that, due to lower energy generation, are still in abundance.

"One year or even six months of savings will not significantly frustrate our plans. The main modernisation factor is the DPM-2 programme. All activities scheduled within this programme will be completed on time. You can even find positives in the current situation: we have more time to develop better design and project documents."

About oil spill in Norilsk

Rostekhnadzor has begun inspections at all thermal power plants regarding the condition of backup fuel tanks. SGC's plants burn coal, with no backup fuel, but with fuel oil as a starting fuel. As explained by SGC's Technical Director, at the moment, the entire tank farm is being inspected.

Oleg Petrov said: "A few words about Norilsk. Tanks for backup fuel are hazardous production facilities, and no one is safe from incidents. We, the technicians, are responsible for everything, including production figures, end products, people's life and health and the environment. It is a huge responsibility. I wish my colleagues from CHPP-3 in Norilsk patience and more patience. I hope they will be able to mitigate this emergency without loss."

DPM: what was \$1.2 bn spent on?

Investing under the DPM programme doubled the safety of SGC's generation facilities. "In 2010, we recorded 258 accidents, while in 2019, this figure fell to 135. This indicates that the money was not wasted, but helped upgrade many pieces of equipment," Oleg Petrov said.

The regions received new generation facilities, drivers of their economic development. For example, a new power unit in Abakan with a capacity of 136 MW and 75 Gcal per hour will make it possible to supply heat to neighbouring Chernogorsk and increase the housing construction pace in Abakan.

"No one can say that we are slowing down the development of the city. DPM also stimulated the development of power engineering in Russia and supported design institutes and manufacturing plants," Oleg Petrov said.

DPM-2

Under the DPM-2 programme, Krasnoyarsk CHPP-1 is being upgraded. On 28 May, SGC began to install boiler No. 10 followed by boiler No. 7. By the beginning of the heating season, the company will have commissioned a new stack 275 metres tall. This is a unique high-rise structure, which will noticeably improve the dispersion of emissions and ameliorate the environmental situation in Krasnoyarsk.

Construction is on schedule, and most of the installation work is done by SGC on its own. "Despite the pandemic, we do not expect any difficulties and will not make changes to the project," Oleg Petrov said.