

ABB factory in Łódź



ABB factory in Łódź is the company's largest manufacturing center in Poland. It is also one of the world's largest and most important manufacturers of distribution transformers, power transformers, insulation kits and elements for power transformers as well as transformer components. Products from the Łódź factory are distributed to markets in dozens of countries across the world, and its engineering staff are the elite of the profession.

Situated on Aleksandrowska Street in Łódź, the ABB manufacturing complex employs more than a thousand people, which represents a third of all employees of the company in Poland. Clustered under one roof, three plants produce power transformers of up to 570 MVA rated power and 400 kV rated voltage and liquid-filled distribution transformers of 15 to 2500 kVA rated power. They are supported by the Insulation and Components Plant, which supplies prefabricated assemblies to all ABB power transformer plants in Europe. In 2014 a new Transformer Components Factory at the cost of \$25 million has been built. As a result the factory became one of the world's largest manufacturing centers for transformers and transformer subassemblies. Ultimately the new factory will employ about 140 people, and its production will support all ABB transformer manufacturing facilities in the region.

For years, factory and storage buildings have been undergoing steady upgrading. Investments in power and heat infrastructure have been generating millions in savings annually, owing to which the company is perceived as a leader in environmental protection and energy efficiency.

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Distribution transformers

Distribution transformers manufactured in Łódź operate in almost every European country and in many markets on other continents. Statistics show that the past decade has been a breakthrough period for the Distribution Transformer Plant. Production and staffing have increased five times. Today, in the Distribution Transformers product group, the Łódź plant is the second largest in terms of sales value and quantity of transformers manufactured within the ABB Group, and the largest manufacturer of distribution transformers on the continent.

The plant's main customers are Europe's largest distribution companies – German E.ON and its subsidiaries in Sweden, the Czech Republic and Slovakia; Italian ENEL, for which the Distribution Transformers Plant had, until recently, been a key supplier, or French EDF, for which ABB has been implementing project based on non-standard requirements. Obviously enough, Łódź distribution transformers are installed in the networks of all Polish power utilities, e.g. in 2009 the plant was awarded the largest contract ever in the Polish power sector by Polska Grupa Energetyczna. In the recent years, the factory has also specialized in the manufacture of highly energy-efficient amorphous core transformers, as well as transformers that are exceptionally safe for the environment – filled with MIDELE, a biodegradable fluid with a very high ignition temperature.

Power Transformers

Boasting more than 80 years of experience, the Łódź factory is today a major manufacturer of power transformers in Europe. Within the ABB Group, the plant specializes in the manufacture of medium-power transformers of 63 to 200 MVA and with rated voltage of 72.5 to 275 kV, and high-power transformers of 200 to 570 MVA and rated voltage up to 400 kV. More than half of the production is exported to most of the European countries and to the USA and Canada. Each year, 50 to 60 transformers are made, which often reach hundreds of tonnes in weight. Each power transformer manufactured in Łódź is a custom designed and built unit, taking into account the end-user's specific and detailed requirements. In the production process, the latest achievements of science and technology are employed, and its quality sets global standards; therefore transformers made in Łódź operate, among other things, in the UK nuclear plant Sizewell A, feed power to the steam cracking system at the Singapore

petrochemical plant owned by ExxonMobil Asia Pacific, and serve the 1290 MW hydroelectric plant on the Siberian river Zeya. At the same time, the plant, which manufactures mainly export-bound products, has a uniquely strong position in Poland. This is due to three huge contracts with the Polish Power Grid Company for the supply in the years 2008-2012 of 37 power transformers of 160 to 450 MVA rated power, as well as the involvement in projects of key significance to the whole European Union, where ABB supplies equipment for a power substation which will be an important part of the cross-border interconnection between Poland and Lithuania. The project is an extremely important component of the European single energy market, closing what is known as the Baltic Ring. Production quality is complemented by the ABB Groups' most advanced test center, one of the most accurate testing facilities in the world.

Insulation materials

While insulation materials account for just several percent of the value of a transformer, their significance to the equipment quality is colossal. Any error, inaccuracy or mistake in designing or producing an insulation element poses a threat to the correct operation and safety of equipment that is often worth millions of euros. This extremely responsible task is performed for all ABB transformer factories in Europe by the Łódź-based Insulation and Components Plant. The elements are made from pressboard, i.e. cellulose in its purest form. And while paper is not a very heavy material, the largest transformers may contain even a dozen or so tonnes of such insulation.

It is one of the plant's priorities to continuously improve both product quality and service level, and therefore personnel expertise is always at the highest global level. This is guaranteed by the Operational Excellence Program – regular training held throughout the ABB Group, dealing with the improvement of operations, management and the state-of-the-art technical, logistic and organizational solutions.

The Insulation and Components Plant was Poland's first and one of the first ABB factories in the world to implement the Lean Manufacturing, Kaizen and 5S management systems. The experiences were transferred to the company's other factories in Łódź and Przasnysz. They were also drawn upon by managers in plants based in Sweden, Canada and China.

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