

«We have managed to reverse the situation. This is true...»

Norilsk Nickel has gone into overdrive to help resolve industrial safety issues.. Along with that, it is conducting an internal investigation on the reasons why those emergencies occurred. The company's resources will be majorly reallocated so that selecting technologies and contractors is done using criteria that are more in tune with environmental issues. ecologically calibrated criteria. The company's president, Vladimir Potanin, shared more details on the air with Russia 24 TV channel.

“The Russian Arctic has never witnessed this kind of a rescue operation, nor has it confronted an accident that has been this great in scope. The first stage is over. Has everything turned out successfully? ”

“In my view, the Russian President has given his appraisal of this stage, and he stated that we have managed to reverse the situation. This is true: approximately 90% of all the fuel spilled has been collected off the water's surface, and about 70% of the soil has been treated. Speaking in figures, this means over 100,000 tons of soil and more than 32,000 cubic meters of water-and-fuel mixture. Safe storage of these collected waste products has been secured, and additional tanks have been prepared that are being held in reserve for 10,000 cubic meters of water resources and 100,000 tons of soil. Now that is all being disposed of. The water-fuel mixture will be disposed of by pumping it to separation facilities, where the fuel will be separated from water. That fuel will probably even be used subsequently, and then the water will be dumped into a tank designated for further involvement in the production cycle or be otherwise neutralized (we are now looking for the best solution). However, it does not pose a danger any more. As far as the soil is concerned, the most promising technology involves granulating it, i.e. using cement, other sorbents, and chemical additives it is transformed into environmentally safe granules that can be either kept at storage facilities or even used as construction material for waste dumps. This is the stage we still need to go through. We plan to cope with the water-and-fuel mixture within 2.5 – 3 months, and oil industry specialists are assisting us with this. They have contractors that have handled similar issues on multiple occasions. And we are currently cleaning-up the soil chiefly using our own resources. Legislation provides us with 11 months to cope with this issue, and we expect to do it on time. At present, the company is reviewing all similar facilities, and are giving top priority to implementing supplemental industrial safety measures. We have a long-term investment program in place that exceeds 100 billion rubles in scope – this is a sound program that covers the next few years. We are planning to spend RUB 2.5 bln additionally on pressing issues relating to improving the safety measures that exist by the end of 2020, and another RUB 11.5 bln is allotted for next year. As the President said, this situation has revealed a systemic issue, and we will continue our efforts to study permafrost and how it behaves; we will reinforce the monitoring system and retrofit it with the necessary state-of-the-art equipment. And the attitude that we adopt toward these issues will certainly change: it will become more scrupulous. For this, we will even have to reallocate our resources in a fundamentally new way. This is not an issue of money or budgetary funds – we do allocate funding beforehand for these purposes”.

“However, there remain issues in terms of selecting technologies and contractors – these resources are hard to come by in the Norilsk industrial area”.

“There is no such market situation where we can gather contractors together from all over the country. This situation has ratcheted up people's desire to help, for which we are thankful to numerous organizations that have provided assistance, and in particular Transneft, Gazprom Neft, and the rescue teams. Currently, we have to adjust how we allocate specific resources – both in-house, contractor-owned, and design engineering resources – to go into overdrive and help resolve those industrial safety issues. The next objective is to fully restore the entire ecosystem to the maximum possible extent.

Presently, the company is conducting its internal investigation, and it is going to bolster the measures that it takes. Regarding criticism, people have displayed many different emotions, but it does not obviate the seriousness of the situation. Owing to this, we have been on the received end of both support and criticism. I believe that we must resolve the issue, and not get stuck in an attempt to stop the stream of this criticism. Our

primary objective now is to ensure that the city and production do not suffer this coming winter. Now this is our main task, and we have concentrated our efforts on that. As far as our further plans are concerned, especially the more promising ones, as I have already said we have a programme that needs to be augmented now. It stipulates, among other things, transitioning to alternative fuel sources and to a safer system for duplicating how stations are supplied, and repairing various pipelines, water mains, and other facilities that are certainly, objectively speaking, rather obsolete. I would like to emphasize that the issue is not that we are saving money, but that it is not that easy to accomplish. It has not been done for decades, it has become outdated, and that is why we are trying to improve the situation with every passing year. In particular, during the last five years we have increased the amount of investment in everything that we can generally call industrial safety by more than twofold. For the next five years, we will double the amounts that we are investing now. The main thing for us is to build up the capacity held by engineering organizations, process solutions, and contractors. If we speak of a 5–7 year time frame, then I think we would actually like to alter the industrial landscape around the city, and make it not only more safe and functional, but also more appealing to the eye”.

Source: [Russia 24 TV channel](#)