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SUEZ develops its expertise in the dismantling and recovery of wind turbines with a recovery target close to 100%

Wind energy plays a major role on a global scale in the transition to decarbonized energies. With a recycling rate of 85-90%, the wind market must go further in its circular economy approach. Already committed for several years in the dismantling of waste from electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), airplanes and end-of-life vehicles, SUEZ now supports energy operators and manufacturers in the recycling of end-of-life wind turbines.

After 15 to 20 years in operation, wind turbines must be replaced by next-generation equipment that is more high-performing and powerful. In France, approximately 1,500 turbines will have to be dismantled in the next five years¹. Ahead of the French national regulation aimed at mandatory recycling by 2023, SUEZ is already supporting wind farm managers and manufacturers in the recovery of first-generation wind turbines. Indeed, SUEZ has begun to use its expertise for on-site dismantling since June 2019. For example, the Group operated two dismantling sites for first-generation wind turbines in Port-La-Nouvelle, near Narbonne (southern France), with a national wind farm manager, with a recovery rate of 98%, including 97% for material recovery.

Once the wind turbines have been dismantled, SUEZ extracts the different materials (steel, copper, aluminum, cables, fiberglass, waste electrical and electronic equipment) and directs them to the most suitable recycling channels, taking into account the environmental footprint of transport. All material flows are rigorously identified and traced until they are recycled, and a complete material assessment is submitted to the wind farm manager. This recovery avoids the extraction of fossil resources and rare virgin materials.

SUEZ also provides technical support in the dismantling and recovery of wind turbine blades and has already recycled more than twenty blades extending up to 50 meters in length for various sites across France. The Group also works with turbine manufacturers on the logistics and recycling of materials which have already been dismantled. In 2021, several dismantling projects are scheduled for wind turbines with blades of 25 to 40 meters in length.

SUEZ is also part of the “ZEBRA” project, led by the IRT Jules Verne advanced research institute, for the development of 100% recyclable composite wind turbine blades. Launched in September 2020, the project gathers industrial players and research centers, and aims to demonstrate the technical, economic and environmental feasibility of thermoplastic wind turbine blades, using an eco-design approach to facilitate recycling.

Fabrice Rossignol, Chief Executive Officer, SUEZ Recycling & Recovery France, commented: *“SUEZ aims to be a key player in the dismantling of wind turbines with overall control of deconstruction and management of all waste streams to be recycled. We seek to support the various players in renewable energies, wind farm managers, turbine manufacturers and energy suppliers, in shaping a virtuous and circular economy.”*

¹ Source: <https://www.revolution-energetique.com/le-demantelement-et-le-recyclage-des-eoliennes/>

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About SUEZ:

Since the end of the 19th century, SUEZ has built expertise aimed at helping people to constantly improve their quality of life by protecting their health and supporting economic growth. With an active presence on five continents, SUEZ and its 90,000 employees strive to preserve our environment's natural capital: water, soil, and air. SUEZ provides innovative and resilient solutions in water management, waste recovery, site remediation and air treatment, optimizing municipalities' and industries' resource management through "smart" cities and improving their environmental and economic performance. The Group delivers sanitation services to 64 million people and produces 7.1 billion m³ of drinking water. SUEZ is also a contributor to economic growth, with more than 200,000 jobs created directly and indirectly on an annual basis, and a provider of new resources, with 4.2 million tons of secondary raw materials produced. By 2030, the Group is targeting 100% sustainable solutions, with a positive impact on our environment, health and climate. SUEZ generated total revenue of €17,2 billion in 2020.

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