

Neuengamme Concentration Camp and its Surroundings

Despite efforts at secrecy, Neuengamme concentration camp was not isolated entirely. People from the surrounding area encountered the work commandos and watched the prisoners at work on the Dove Elbe, at the port at Zollenspieker and in other places. SS dog squads searched farms and fields for escaped prisoners. Some locals took the road leading past the main entrance of Neuengamme concentration camp to work during the week. In the evenings, young women from the Vierlande region would often wait for SS men at the northern gate of the camp.

Many local companies supplied the camp with goods, and inns in the surrounding area served the SS members. A mortician from Bergedorf regularly came to collect the bodies of prisoners who had died. Several companies in the region made use of the prisoners' labour, among them a timber merchant, a garage, a bakery and a hardware shop. Many people reacted to what they witnessed or learned with indifference, some reacted with curiosity, pity or fear.