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Optimising Railway Performance

How can railway operators streamline operations to benefit passengers and increase cost effectiveness?

Richard Ellis-Edwards, Frequentis Public Transport New Business Development Manager, explains...

Disruptions to normal rail service are inevitable for all heavy and light rail operators, no matter how efficient their overall performance. Signalling issues, power failures, or even the seasonal challenges of leaf fall or temperature-related speed restrictions may cause significant delays, service alterations and cancellations. There are also potential emergency situations where the safety of passengers as well as rolling stock and infrastructure must take precedence over business as usual operations.

Yet, when these events occur, an incident management solution

can really make the difference. It puts operators in a position to communicate critical information to the relevant stakeholders, both internal and external, and trigger the right processes, therefore ensuring that the necessary steps are taken to recover service to normal operations levels as quickly as possible.

Frequentis has assisted multiple operators worldwide to realise the benefits of efficient and effective incident and crisis management with its control centre solutions.

“In general, the main issues in the management of incidents are insufficient resources and inadequate compliance with the operator’s internal guidelines,” says Ellis-Edwards. *“Also, a lack of clear operational models and agreed principles between all the parties involved, i.e. critical infrastructure providers, public authorities, the police, ambulance and fire-fighting services, internal departments at railway companies and specialist institutes.”*

To meet this challenge, operators need to correlate data from a

growing number of operational systems and make sense of it at sufficient speed to respond effectively – either to handle incidents when underway, or to prevent, predict or flag them up.

Frequentis believes that solutions in the field of incident management should be based around decision-making, communication and workflows.

The Frequentis incident crisis management (ICM) solution guides the user through the necessary steps to be performed in an incident, depending on the occurrence and stakeholders required to resolve it. The ICM solution tool enables different groups to work on the same incident together, adding and editing information simultaneously. Furthermore, the ICM mobile application gives staff at stations and on trains real-time information about what’s happening. All these features and functions speed up the workflow and reduce potential errors. The ICM also documents all steps undertaken during incident resolution for post-incident and safety analysis.

The Frequentis ICM solution benefits Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) through the workflow and incident management IT tools, which are employed during operational incidents and during times of service disruption, that can occur at any point across its extensive network.

“As part of ÖBB’s commitment to delivering a reliable and punctual rail service for its many customers across Europe, we continually search for new technologies that can provide improvements and efficiencies and can be readily integrated into our operational practices. One such example of this is Frequentis ICM solution, which logs all pertinent information associated with any incidents, including media recordings and imagery, and effortlessly interfaces with third-party solutions making the role of the operator less paperwork-intensive,” says a representative of ÖBB *“This means less impact on journeys and a more reliable and punctual train service across our railway networks.”*

Providing clear, informed, timely and precise information and communications to internal and external stakeholders ensures accurate logging and distribution of all relevant information, allowing teams and partners to make critical decisions and take the necessary actions faster than before.

Geoff Howard, Sydney Trains Railway Operations Centre Program Director also observed the benefits of the Frequentis ICM, stating: *“Operators have praised the ease of use of the [Frequentis] ICM solution for logging and viewing incidents, and the coordination of all communication, providing*

up-to-date information to our customers. Being able to respond to and recover from incidents faster will ensure that we can cater for the projected capacity increases and meet the customer demand of the future.”

The OCM is designed to act as the starting point for an efficient and paperless workflow for operational communication and for incident management by allowing its operator to enter new incidents automated or semi-automated when they occur. All the incidents present in an operators’ designated area can also be seen through their console. When an incident is entered into the OCM, the incident manager will be notified immediately at the ICM, and all the relevant information will be presented to them.

“With the advancements in digital technologies, railway clients are looking to establish state-of-the-art rail operations centres and centralise operations by aligning functional roles, systems and processes,” explains Ellis-Edwards. *“Our Incident and Crisis Management solution supports faster communication of accurate, consistent and timely information to all relevant parties, including updates on service disruptions and service restoration. Our intention with this technology software solution is to drive automation to the next level, remove duplication and provide information as soon as possible in this workflow, always in electronic form and always with automatic handover between the systems.”*

“Beyond implementing optimised business processes for incident management, the solution supports access to notification sources such

as third-party web applications and media platforms, as well as an incident-reporting application for mobile devices. Without paperwork, duplication is eliminated, and processes become significantly more efficient.”

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Frequentis AG is an international supplier of communication and information systems for control centres with safety-critical tasks.

In the field of public transport, Frequentis’ solutions leverage over 70 years of experience in safety-critical communications and applications. Cross-industry expertise gained from supporting control centre communication lays the foundations for industry-leading rail and urban transport solutions. In addition to incident and crisis management the company also holds the number one market share in GSM-R dispatcher terminal positions: more than 8,000 units are currently deployed in customer control centres in over 25 countries.

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