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THE SWISS NUMBERING SYSTEM

Brian Hemming

It is a number of years since an explanation of the systems used in Switzerland to number locomotives and rolling stock appeared in this magazine. The editor has therefore asked me to prepare a series of articles that will, hopefully, explain the way these systems work. This first one will deal with the "old" classification system which is still carried by many examples of older SBB/CFF rolling stock and by much of the private railways motive power and coaching stock. It consists of a series of prefix and suffix letters followed by a fraction relating to the axles on the vehicle and perhaps also followed by Roman numbers in superscript. With the introduction of computer numbers the axle description and Roman numbers are omitted from the classification.

The prefix letters used are:

Locomotives

R	Maximum speed greater than 110 km/h
A	Maximum speed 80 to 110 km/h
B	Maximum speed 70 to 80 km/h
C	Maximum speed 60 to 65 km/h
D	Maximum speed 45 to 55 km/h
E	Shunting locomotives
G	Narrow gauge adhesion locomotives
H	Rack fitted locomotives
HG	Narrow gauge rack and adhesion locomotives
O	Open wagon body
T	Tractor
X	Departmental vehicle

The suffix letters which apply to all motive power and driving trailers are:

a	Battery powered
e	Electric powered
em	Electric and diesel powered
h	Rack fitted (only for railcars and tractors). - if this precedes the a, e or m then the unit is pure rack - if this follows the a, e or m then the unit is rack and adhesion
m	Diesel or petrol powered
r	Restaurant vehicle
rot	Rotary snow plough
t	Driving trailer
Xt	Self propelled departmental vehicle

Railcars, Coaches and Driving Trailers

R	Only used if maximum speed greater than 110 km/h - and as a prefix to the following:
A	First class accommodation
B	Second class accommodation
C	Third class accommodation (now only on historic stock)
D	Baggage compartment
S	Saloon vehicle
Z	Postal compartment

The numbers of axles of locomotives and railcars are shown as a fraction where the numerator indicates the number of powered and the denominator the total number of axles, for example 3/7, 4/4, 12/12.

Finally, the Roman numbers I, II, III, IV etc. are used in superscript after the axle count to indicate differences in construction between vehicles in the same series, for example Re4/4^I, Re4/4^{II}, Re4/4^{III}.

The Swiss classification of motive power is still carried on many items of motive power although it was officially superseded in 1989. The situation is likely to change again in the coming years with the likely adoption throughout Europe of the UIC system. Articles dealing with the Swiss 1989 and the UIC systems will hopefully appear in future issues of this magazine.