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FLIRTING IN NORWAY

Ron Smith looks at Swiss rolling stock operating in Norway



Against fierce international competition, Stadler won an order to supply NSB (Norwegian State Railways) with fifty 5-car FLIRT emus. Twenty four units are NSB Class 74 “Short Regional Trains” (SRT) for journeys up to 3 hours, with 216 seats plus 44 “Comfort” class seats. Twenty six units are NSB Class 75 “Long Local Trains” (LLT) for journeys up to 90 minutes with 235 seats. Top speed is 200 kph. NSB are now taking-up options for “Long Regional Trains” for journeys up to 7 hours, and “Short Local Trains” for journeys up to 45 minutes. The Norwegian specification is particularly stringent. Air conditioning must cope with rapid changes in ambient temperatures as trains go from sea level to high altitudes and back again in just an hour or so. The temperature range is between -40C in winter to +35C in summer. The trains must cope with 1m deep snowdrifts for 60m, with particular emphasis placed on sealed door systems and driver visibility. The specification includes; dense insulation; closed-circuit toilets; 69% low-floor availability; high reliability (redundancy); modularity, and the use of already well-proven technology. Low external noise levels were also specified. The U.I.C. standard is 78dbA at 160kph whilst the NSB FLIRTs make only 70dbA at 200kph. By comparison, a

Mercedes S600 car makes 77dbA, a BMW 7-series 74dbA, and a Chevrolet Corvette 84dbA! One – possibly unique – specification is that the trains must have no adverse reaction to hitting an Elk that can be 2.3 metres long, weight 800 kilos, and have antlers of 2m spread, at 56kph. Around 900 Elk are killed every year on the NSB so Elk damage must also be quickly repairable. The FLIRTs have an internal safety cage in the cab and easily replaceable exchange panels. Currently NSB punctuality (apart from the 95% of the Oslo airport shuttles) is around 80%. With the advent of the FLIRTs this is expected to improve considerably. To ensure a smooth entry into traffic, computer based training commenced in May 2010; a full sized mock up for crew training (operating doors, toilets and catering equipment) at Drammen was in operation in November 2010; as was a full driver simulator unit. The SRT units were planned to be in operation by May 2012 and the LLT units by May 2013 however, there has been a delay due to an unfortunate accident, allegedly caused by a NSB driver going too fast on a trial run. Despite the very high Swiss Franc making Stadler’s costs so much greater than their competitors, Swiss Quality and innovation has won through in Norway. 



TOP: Stadler 74518 at Drammen in Norway

LEFT: No 74111 at Drammen

RIGHT: The simulator for the new units

All photos: Ron Smith taken on 12th June 2012

