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Hochrhein Container Terminal - Rekingen.

Robert Amstutz

The Hochrhein Terminal at Rekingen. Photos: Robert Amstutz on 29.03.2018

In the heyday of the cement works and the Solvay Soda factory, Rekingen in Canton Aargau, on the line from Koblenz to Bülach, was the largest rail freight terminal in Canton Aargau, but two weeks before the December 2017 timetable change SBB Cargo announced that they would no longer serve the facility. This affected the Hochrhein Container Terminal located in the grounds of the former cement works, wagonload customers within the Solvay industrial park and also the transport of raw timber from Rekingen to destinations within Europe. At the same time, the previous operator of the container terminal terminated their lease. Faced with the above problems, the owners of the sites sought a solution and "Bahn-Support Gmbh", a subsidiary of Swiss Rail Traffic (SRT) has been contracted to handle traffic between Rekingen and the Limmattal (Zürich) marshalling yard, in addition to shunting the former Rekingen cement works and Solvay sites. SBB Cargo agreed to SRT continuing to use the SBB Cargo booking system so the freight movements are linked into the national network.

The Hochrhein Container Terminal (HCT) was opened in 2004 and was operated for the last 10-years by Swiss Terminal AG. In future it will be operated by LGZ Hochrhein AG, who are developing the former cement works site, and Indermuehle AG, a local transportation firm that also operates a large fleet of buses for PostAuto. The operator has fortunately retained its core of existing, experienced staff. In the first month after the new start (and despite the Christmas and New Year holidays) 130 wagonloads were handled at HCT. With the continued pressure on road transport in terms of cost and environment issues, the company is optimistic that they can generate much more traffic via Rekingen.

HCT covers an area of 40,000m/sq. and has five 300m long tracks that can be served by the 50t lifting capacity crane that spans the tracks. There is space for 1,250 normal sized containers under the crane. Additionally there is stacking room on site for 750 empty containers, a secure storage area for up to 40 containers containing dangerous goods, and facilities for handling refrigerated containers. Customs facilities are also available on-site in co-operation with the neighbouring furniture transport company DST. Separately, in the last few years between 4,000 and 12,000 tonnes of unprocessed timber has been despatched annually from Rekingen to destinations within Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Austria. Swiss forestry companies prefer, where possible, to transport their natural product by environmentaly friendly means such as rail rather than by road.

SRT was founded in 2008. For the traffic between Rekingen and Limmattal SRT usually uses a hybrid Bombadier TRAXX locomotive No. LM 487 001 On the main line this locomotive is electrically powered, but is also fitted with a diesel motor for the "last mile", enabling it to work on non-electrified lines and thus into HCT. The train leaves Rekingen at 09.00, usually via Bülach, and returns to Rekingen at 14.49, either via Bülach or Turgi. The company is currently in negotiations to be permitted to work traffic between Rekingen and Muttenz (Basel) yard. SRT, who are based in Glattbrugg near Zürich airport, is a properly licensed, but niche player, on the Swiss railway scene. They handle rail traffic that is unattractive to the larger railway companies, as well as offering various measuring/gauging services. They own six diesel shunting locomotives and the above mentioned Bombardier TRAXX locomotive. Interestingly, they also own the prototype EW 1V restaurant car, which is serviceable and can be leased. In 2010 they were contracted to move the highly contaminated earth from the special waste disposal site in Koelliken (Canton Aargau). In autumn 2018 they were also contracted to move sugar beet to the Frauenfeld sugar beet processing factory.

SRT Traxx loco LM487001 at Rekingen.