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Over & above

22/10/2013 | Channel: [Infrastructure](#)

Zeck GmbH brings German-based engineering and innovation to the rail industry with its technically leading overhead line machinery

For three generations now Zeck GmbH has been developing and producing machines for special applications. The company began life in 1918 with a focus on agricultural machinery, before later moving into the development of equipment for overhead line construction in 1966. This included pioneering the world's first puller-brake combination machine in 1973. By 1996 Zeck had taken another important turn in its history with the first manufacture of machines for catenary construction.

Much of the company's success is down to its technical innovation and drive to improve its equipment in line with customer needs. As such it is no surprise that Zeck machines enjoy an internationally leading position in terms of reliability, technology, efficiency and safety. "Each of our customers have different requirements according to their own technical specifications," describes sales director Stephan Lanner. "For example China Railway Corporation has very different needs compared to Deutsche Bahn or Network Rail."

CEO Michael Zeck continues: "The main task our machines are used for is the installation of overhead transmission wires and catenary on the railway, whether this for new construction or changes and repairs to existing lines. It's the individual specifications for delivering this which change, so we operate a customisable modular concept for each machine. We have lots of different proven components such as cranes, operator cabins, and tension pullers, which can be put together into a different configuration to meet each need."



At present the market is looking stronger than even for Zeck as by the end of 2013 the company will have produced close to nine units, more than it has ever done in one year before. "Our products are engineered and designed for safe handling in the field," notes Stephan. "With German based engineering and technology, we can offer flexibility, high-efficiency working, accuracy, and long-term reliability as our equipment is built to last 30 years."

Michael elaborates on some of this technical capability: "The most important thing is to be able to handle the wires in a good way. One key aspect of this performance is the ability of the machine to handle the unrolling of the wire at a constant tension for installation, even when the wagon starts or stops. Our machines also record key data and report on a daily basis, either by sending information to a web-based portal where it can be viewed by the project manager, or by downloading this to a USB stick. This shows the whole day's work including speed of the machine, and tension of the line."

This year Zeck is also celebrating its 95th anniversary, which will see it hold a two day in-house exhibition for 300 invited industry guests. This will be based on the company's history to date, its equipment, and developments, with a wide range of machinery on show. Although Zeck usually holds a unique event for each of its five-

year anniversary milestones, this year is one of the biggest so far given the strength of the industry and growth in demand.

This is demonstrated in just some of the projects that Zeck is currently working on. One is the supply of five new machines for Network Rail's Great Western electrification upgrade project electrifying the railway between London and Cardiff, including links to Newbury and Oxford. This builds on a relationship that stems back to 2001 when Zeck first supplied equipment to change the contact wires at the West Coast Mainline between London and Manchester. The reliability and efficiency of these vehicles saw the work completed in just two years instead of the forecast three, which in turn saw Zeck awarded an award for quality construction.



Elsewhere the company is delivering machinery for all types of rail projects from high speed in the form of the new TVG line in France, and the Frankfurt-Cologne ICE connection in Germany, to the new 57-kilometre Gotthard Tunnel rail link in Switzerland. Zeck is also working outside of Europe building six units for use on the new rail network in China, and others for a major project in South Korea.

"We are focusing on exporting in particular this year with high demand forecast," highlights Stephan. "We're working with partners in the US, UK, Switzerland, Germany, Luxemburg and China, and are also focusing on the east with Russia, as well as continuing our strong relationships with our subsidiary in Thailand for Asia, India and Middle East. We've also been placing new investments into all of our core business areas such as production, modifications and innovation, and services. We face new challenges and requirements every day and being able to fulfil these makes us very proud."

"Establishing a service structure in our main markets is a key aim," concludes Michael. "There is a high level of demand from our clients for us to have a presence locally from an aftersales perspective. We are already there with our sales representatives, but its now about extending that network to include ongoing services and support."

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