

EMR pioneer unique driver training techniques to introduce new trains

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East Midlands Railway has successfully delivered unique driver training programmes to allow the introduction of 2 new trains into the EMR fleet.

EMR resumed their driver training programme in August after being forced to stop due to COVID-19 earlier in the year. Since the training resumed, EMR have aimed to train 4 drivers per week on Class 170's at both Derby and Nottingham, with an additional 4 drivers on Class 180's at Derby. The latter allowing the first of the Class 180s to enter service, as planned, on Monday 14th December.

Due to the impact COVID-19 had upon training, new agreements were forged in collaboration with EMR union colleagues to ensure training could be delivered safely.

As a business, EMR had never attempted to train so many drivers on different fleets, across multiple locations simultaneously, yet they have done so, whilst also adapting to the restrictions put in place by COVID-19. Typically, driver training involves more than one person in a confined drivers cab for extended periods of time. This had to be adapted due to COVID-19.

To keep the teams safe during the pandemic, all of the 'close contact' training requires Drivers to enter into COVID-secure training bubbles. Every Instructor and Trainee takes a COVID-19 test every week, prior to training. This, alongside daily safety declarations and temperature checks, are proving vital to ensuring the teams can continue to train safely.

EMR Driver Instructors, Driver Managers and the Learning & Development team created training materials based on information gathered from other train operating companies. This involved bringing in an instructor from Hull Trains for training on the Class 180 trains and for the Class 170 units, EMR looked to its sister train operator, Scotrail for support with the training programme.

EMR's Driver Instructor teams are going above and beyond to provide high quality, consistent training for all of the Drivers. They have moved the training around the network to suit the availability of the new fleet, developing a full catalogue of training materials and even learning sections of new route so that they can train using the paths allocated for each course.

The courses deliver two new traction types across four locations simultaneously to recover time lost due to COVID-19. EMR Mainline drivers at Nottingham, alongside Depot drivers from Eastcroft, have learned Class 170 units, whilst Mainline drivers at Derby and Depot drivers at Etches Park have learned both Class 170 and Class 180's.

The Class 170 project saw 3 trains enter passenger service yesterday (December 14th), alongside the timetable change, serving the Robin Hood Line. The training programme will continue until August 2021, when EMR will have trained over 265 Drivers on the new fleet across four locations.

The Class 180's also entered into service yesterday on the Midland Mainline and are operating on EMR's Intercity route. The 180's will be in service until EMR's new Aurora fleet will be introduced in 2023.

Chris Fairclough, Driver Depot Manager for Nottingham, Boston, Lincoln and Norwich EMR, said: "The Driver Training Programme had to be adapted quickly due to COVID-19. With social distancing measures in place, we have worked harder than ever to ensure we could train as many drivers in the safest and quickest way possible.

"Safety is always kept at the forefront of our operations and everyone has worked tirelessly to ensure that is the case.

"With new style trains coming into use, which requires our drivers to re-train on the new models, the pressure has been on to learn everything about how the new fleet operates; from rules and regulations to fire safety, it has not been easy, but I am incredibly proud of all the work that has gone into the Driver Training Programme."

Photo credit: East Midlands Railway