

# Freightliner opens Ipswich Operational Training Academy

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Freightliner has officially opened its first Operational Training Academy, located on the 7th floor of Ipswich's St. Vincent House.

The Operational Training Academy will prepare Freightliner's freight train drivers for the in-cab digital signalling being introduced on the East Coast Main Line.

Digital signalling, based on the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), uses state-of-the-art technology to provide continuous signalling information through a screen in the driver's cab. This improves reliability, makes rail even safer, reduces emissions, and delivers more flexibility in rail operations.

ERTMS is expected to deliver the ability to run longer, heavier and faster freight trains on the UK network – encouraging the movement of freight on rail and lowering emissions. Train drivers will be given continuous live information regarding speed and braking requirements, with the safeguard of automatic train protection (ATP).

Blake Jones, Freightliner managing director – Rail Services, said: "Freightliner is delighted to be part of this

programme and it recognises the importance of ERTMS in making our railways safer for both railway workers and the general public.”

The Academy is being funded as part of the East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP), a £1billion transformation that will deliver digital signalling on the southern part of the East Coast Main Line from London King’s Cross to Stoke Tunnels (near Grantham) by the end of the decade.

Ed Akers, principal programme sponsor, ECDP, said: “Freightliner is an integral ECDP partner and is working collaboratively to ensure the Programme’s benefits are delivered in full. The academy opening is an important part of delivering the change required and will help us provide a legacy of new capability within the rail industry.”

Freightliner’s vision is for the Academy to endure beyond ECDP. The new site which contains three classrooms, learning spaces and new learning resources, is already hosting train drivers starting their ERTMS training. A dedicated team of Operational Trainers has been created to support the learning. Later this month, the site’s activity gains momentum with the first cohort of Ipswich based trainee train drivers joining the business.

Louise Ward, Freightliner’s safety and sustainability director, said: “Freightliner continues to invest in the training of its people. The use of simulators allows drivers to apply their classroom knowledge in a practical and safe environment supporting a more comprehensive learning experience.”

The ultra-light simulators will be exclusively used for training from Autumn 2023 when Freightliner’s first Class 66V locomotive goes in for the fitment of ERTMS technology.

*Photo credit: Network Rail*