

Greater Anglia's new trains help drive best-ever autumn performance results

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Train services in East Anglia have continued their record-beating run of performance during the autumn months with an overall punctuality score of 94.48% from 19 September 2021 – 8 January 2022, making it the best autumn yet for the train company.

Autumnal weather conditions and falling leaves traditionally pose problems for the railway as they stick to damp rails and passing trains compress them into a thin, slippery black layer on the rail which – much like black ice on the roads – can increase braking distance, reduce acceleration and damage train wheels, leading to delays and cancellations.

Greater Anglia's new trains have been credited with handling the challenges of the 'leaf fall' season significantly better than the operator's old fleet.

Delay minutes were down 8% this autumn compared to 2020 and 89% compared to 2019.

Cancellations due to autumn weather were down 42% compared to 2020 – 7 cancellations compared to 12 last year – and 91% compared to 2019.

The new trains also feature improved Wheel Slide Protection, which is like ABS in cars and helps the trains' wheels to brake more evenly, preventing wheel damage and wear that could lead to trains being taken out of service for repair.

These trains also have dynamic traction control systems, to stop wheels from spinning. When trains are trying to take power, they can spin on the spot if they can't get the grip they need to move the train.

If train wheels spin in one place, the heat created can cause structural changes to the metal, which in turn reduces their life and can cause burns on the track.

Because of this, and improvements to general wheel maintenance routines, none of the wheels on the new Stadler train fleet suffered any damage or needed repair during the autumn period, drastically reducing the number of trains needing be taken out of service for attention.

All trains are also fitted with automatic sanders which deposit a layer of grit onto the rail, and as the train passes over it, the heavy wheels compress the grit which then cleans off the slippery leaf mulch, helping to improve grip.

During Autumn, the Marks Tey – Sudbury line recorded the best punctuality at 98.31%, followed by the Norwich – Great Yarmouth line at 98.05%.

95% of Intercity trains between Norwich and London ran on time during this period, and 93.3% of services on the West Anglia route ran on time.

Managing Director, Jamie Burles, said: "I'm really pleased that, during what has traditionally been one of the most difficult periods of the year for performance, we have continued to run punctual and reliable services for our customers.

"These continued good results demonstrate that our new trains are helping to deliver real improvements in punctuality and reliability, coping much better with the challenges of autumn than our old trains, and are helping to transform journeys for people in the region."

Photo credit: Greater Anglia