

Keeping the Rail Supply Chain Operating during the Lockdown

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Unipart Rail occupies a critical position in the rail supply chain. As the supply chain partner of many of the well known train operating companies and infrastructure repair/renewal contractors, its role in managing the supply base to meet changing demands has required a systematic response.

In common with much of the Rail industry, the business has been affected by the pandemic. The disruptions in the supply chain have come from both sides – a reduction in maintenance, projects and renewals as the numbers of trains reduce on the infrastructure, as well as supplier disruption as raw materials become scarce and some suppliers temporarily shut down manufacture to ensure their future survival.

Unipart Rail is working hard to maintain materials supply during the lockdown. It has always maintained high levels of availability through close partnering across the whole of the supply chain, but the pandemic has introduced such a large element of uncertainty that staff adjusted their way of working to respond to it.

Some initiatives in place include:

Manufacturing

Unipart Rail has risk assessed all of its manufacturing operations and have adopted social distancing guidelines to protect employees and customers from Covid19.

It has an extremely skilled workforce in its manufacturing operations – skills that it has always ensured are shared across whole team, to allow flexibility against varying demand patterns. These are proving invaluable now as demand for products changes. The company has redeployed teams into the manufacturing of signalling and power products because it knows that when the lockdown is eased it will see higher demand in these areas.

By focusing on these items now, it will be able to maintain short lead times when demand increases.

Procurement

Unipart Rail's supplier base is wide and varied and has been affected in different ways. Many of its suppliers have ranges that are heavily aligned with the rail system – and as key industry suppliers they have been able to maintain outputs.

However, where suppliers are mainly manufacturing non-key industries and have seen a large decline in demand they have mothballed production and furloughed their team.

It has responded to this by:

- reviewing customer priorities with suppliers to ensure that the flow of essential materials continues during the lockdown
- allocated additional resource to critical areas to ensure it continues to support the most strategically important suppliers through this difficult time.
- Engaged with new suppliers to bring sanitising and protective equipment onto its portfolio.

Noel Travers, Managing Director Unipart Rail said: "We will continue to respond to our customers' demand for materials and services during the pandemic and will ramp up our responses when the lockdown eases. In the meantime we will ensure that we continue to serve the world's railways by adding value with our supply chain, technology and product solutions."

Visit www.unipartrail.com for more details.