

NEWS

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INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY MAKES TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED COMBINED TRANSPORT POSSIBLE

Spedition Mainsped provides integrated road-rail transport for sensitive goods from pharmaceutical group Sanofi-Aventis

A new solution created from proven individual components: cranable thermo-trailers with autonomous energy supply and remote temperature control

There is a sharp increase in shipments of goods that need to be transported at specific temperatures. Previously, however, this growth has bypassed road-rail combined transport (CT). New technology could change all that. Kombiverkehr, the European market leader in moving freight from road to rail, started transporting temperature-controlled goods on trains in the international block train network in April. "Until now, there have been no cranable thermo-trailers, whilst rail transport has lacked both an energy supply for refrigeration units and any way of controlling and monitoring temperatures," says Armin Riedl, managing director of Kombiverkehr. "These problems can now be considered as resolved."

The breakthrough comes with cranable, insulated semi-trailers, which Kombiverkehr partner Mainsped has been successfully testing for six months on behalf of pharmaceutical group Sanofi-Aventis. "We looked around the marketplace for proven individual components, had them put together and came up with a new solution," says Ulrich Banse, managing director of Rüsselsheimer Spedition, a specialist in international mainline transport between countries including Germany, Italy and Spain, where it also has its own networks. On the one hand, the new trailers have an autonomous power supply for their refrigeration units. On the other hand, the temperature inside the so-called 'thermokoffer' can be monitored by remote control. "Similar technology has already been tried and tested in Norway, but virtually nothing has been known about it in central Europe and it is now being used in international combined transport for the first time," explains Riedl. The thermo-unit maintains a constant temperature of between two and eight degrees Celsius inside the trailer as required by the consignor, and is supplied by its own fuel tank underneath the trailer. The unit also houses a remote data modem, which regularly transmits temperature data from the vehicle to the assigned freight forwarder's dispatch team. Not only can the temperature be monitored in this way, it can also be regulated by remote control at the same time. It is even possible to adjust temperatures.

Trials conducted between October 2007 and March 2008 subjected consignments of sensitive pharmaceutical goods to and from Italy to a wide variety of climatic conditions, in which the technology proved itself without exception. Since April, as a result of these positive findings, additional Mainsped semi-trailers have been moving temperature-controlled freight from the same customer on trains between Ludwigshafen and Budapest. The capacity of the fuel tank is such that trailers can complete an entire circuit by rail without filling up. Trailers leaving Ludwigshafen on a Monday are unloaded in Budapest in the middle of the week and are back in Ludwigshafen by Friday, without having had to refuel in between. According to Riedl, "Kombiverkehr regularly works with customers to test technical innovations. We are certain that the proven combination from semi-trailer manufacturer Schmitz and refrigeration unit supplier Thermo King provides the breakthrough for temperature-controlled shipments in road to rail combined transport."

The innovative solution has been developed within the framework of the EU "CREAM" project, which is designed to look into yet more ways of transporting temperature-controlled freight in the future on the basis of cost-effective, standardised and proven individual components. The acronym CREAM stands for "Customer-driven Rail-freight services on a European mega-corridor based on Advanced business and operating Models".





Press photograph: Insulated thermo-trailers with autonomous energy supply and remote temperature control could provide a breakthrough for temperature-controlled combined transport

Picture source: Kombi-Terminal Ludwigshafen GmbH (KTL)

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