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MEASURING THE TRACKS Ernst Leutwiler



In November 2005 the SBB took delivery of a new measuring car from Mer Mec Monopoli in Italy. It is numbered Xtmass 99 85 9 160 001-5. This machine is 23.9 metres long, weighs 64 tonnes, and has two 6-cylinder Cummins diesel engines of 336kw, powering two of its four axles. It can operate at 120 kph, and be towed at 160 kph, while measuring the track. This operation is carried out over the whole SBB network twice a year, in spring and autumn. It is also hired-out by other standard gauge railways in Switzerland. Fully fuelled, it can operate for 2000 kms before needing to return to base.

With modern long welded rail, concrete sleepers, and better ballast, track can expect to have a longer life, and so regular checking is necessary to ensure that it conforms to the desired standards. When in operation, this machine has a driver and two technicians on board. It measures - and records on video - contact wire geometry, rail surroundings, gauge, rail geometry, vegetation, rail section, and eddy current inspection. It also measures the rail surface and so identifies any gauge corner cracks. The results from this machine are then used to identify any work that needs to be carried out on the track.

This is probably the cleanest and best maintained vehicle of its type anywhere. It was photographed at Linthal in May 2007. In addition to this splendid piece of equipment SBB also took delivery of an "Eurail-Scout" measuring car at the end of 2007.