

## Network Rail approval makes it easy to locate underground services

A leading provider of cutting-edge underground utilities detectors is on the right track after its technology was given the thumbs up by Network Rail.

Network Rail has eliminated the risk of hitting buried utilities such as power lines, gas and water pipes – traditionally an occupational hazard for rail workers – by approving LTU's Easy Locator for use across its rail network.

Using non-destructive technology (NDT), the Easy Locator has been approved specifically for surveyors and contractors who work 'trackside' on the UK rail network, which is fraught with challenges caused by electromagnetic interference from tracks and overhead power cables.

Easy Locator's radar-based technology allows users to begin scanning for concealed underground works at full walking speed in a matter of seconds and can detect a range of materials including metallic, plastic, concrete or ceramic.

Pete Bevis, Managing Director of LTU, the sole distributor of the Easy Locator in the UK, said Easy Locator was a cost-effective solution to the detection and positioning of underground utilities and other buried objects.

The Easy Locator's components are extensively tested by SAAB Aerospace – it is the world's biggest-selling utility detector with around 85 per cent of the market share.

"The Easy Locator's ground penetrating radar technology complements standard electromagnetic pipe and cable locating equipment. Rail environments have traditionally posed unique challenges for utility surveyors, with electromagnetic interference from the tracks themselves and overhead power cables often affecting the performance of electromagnetic locators. Used in conjunction with the Easy Locator, many of these drawbacks can now be eliminated," he added.

The unit's controls support two antennas, giving it the ability to detect what's under the ground at various depths. The system can also be set to operate in different soil conditions for maximum performance and has a unique backup cursor for precise location of an object. It operates with a dedicated rugged monitor with a transreflective screen and can maintain performance within external temperatures that range from -20oC to +50oC.

Bevis added: "The data obtained on site provides the user, prior to excavation, with the location and depth of almost everything that is buried beneath the track; from cables, pipes and duct banks to conduits, ballast and bedrock.

"The use of this equipment should be a 'no-brainer' for the rail infrastructure industry. This means that there is now no excuse for contractors to take the risk of starting excavation works when, at worst, they have no information and, at best, they are relying on old and outdated information about what lays beneath the ground.

"By being pro-active and using NDT equipment such as the Easy Locator, rail contractors are going to eliminate the inevitable project delays and inconvenience caused from striking an underground utility cable."

The equipment, manufactured by Mala Geoscience in Sweden, has been available to the UK market for the last six years. It has recently been updated to make it more portable than ever and is ready to operate in seconds, with only a few commands required for the user to begin scanning the ground at full walking speed.

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