

# National Rail Enquiries

## THE UK'S BUSIEST NUMBER

Question: What is the busiest telephone number in the UK? Answer: 08457 48 49 50 – otherwise known as National Rail Enquiries.

The service currently answers around 50 million calls a year, providing accurate and impartial information about train running.

'It's a 24-hour-a-day, 364-day-a-year operation,' says Chris Scoggins, National Rail Enquiries' chief executive, who explains that even hard-working contact centre agents are entitled to Christmas Day off. After all, there are virtually no trains running on Christmas Day!

National Rail Enquiries has come a long way since it was established in 1996, as part of the privatisation of Britain's railways. Under British Rail, telephone enquiry staff worked in sub-standard offices, armed only with timetables and a bulky fares manual.

Today's slick operation could hardly present a greater contrast. National Rail Enquiries has evolved so that it now provides a technology-driven service far removed from the BR model.

'In slightly less than eight years National Rail Enquiries has gone from start-up to being an award-winning supplier of a vital service,' says a proud Scoggins.

Statistics prove the point. Last year, six per cent of all calls generated rail journeys that otherwise wouldn't have been made, showing how National Rail Enquiries is helping to make a positive financial contribution to the rail industry.

Customer satisfaction is also running high, thanks to record levels of performance over the past 12 months.

Scoggins adds: 'The accuracy of information our agents provide is currently running at 98 per cent, which is very satisfying. As a consequence, 99 per cent of callers say they would recommend the service to family and friends.'

But today, National Rail Enquiries is much more than a telephone information service. Customers now have a range of options for planning their train journey thanks to advances that include:

- An online journey planner, providing timetable and fare information, ticket availability, and the opportunity to purchase tickets through the Internet and WAP phones;
- A Live Departure Boards service, again internet- and WAP-based, with up-to-the-minute information on train running to and from all 2,500 stations in Britain;
- Line of route disruption and general rail travel information via the Internet;



Train information is a phone call or a click away, thanks to National Rail Enquiries.

- The introduction of electronic retail and fares manuals at contact centres, making National Rail Enquiries the first 'paperless' rail business.

'The expansion has been dramatic,' explains Scoggins. 'Simply by using the 0845 number, the Internet or a WAP phone, customers have access to all sorts of rail information, they can buy tickets and book seats. It couldn't be simpler.'

## LIVE DEPARTURE BOARDS

Launched last year, Live Departure Boards is a real-time, internet-based travel information service provided by National Rail Enquiries.

Available through [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk), Live Departure Boards provides accurate, up-to-the-minute information about train arrivals and departures from every station on Britain's rail network.

The site automatically picks up data held by Network Rail and train operating companies, and presents it in an easy-to-follow format on the website.

'This is a great example of the rail industry working together to achieve a positive result for rail passengers,' said Chris Scoggins, National Rail Enquiries' chief executive.

The innovative service has been developed by Thales Information Systems and is funded by the Strategic Rail Authority.

To find out the latest arrival and departure information, users simply click on the Live Departure Board link on the National Rail home page and then select a station. Every page is automatically updated every two minutes.

'Live Departure Boards uses information from more than 30 operations centres run by train operators around the country,' explains Scoggins. 'This is supplemented by data from TRUST, Network Rail's train tracking system run by Atos Origin,' he adds.

Recent developments include the capability to include updates from train operators' customer

information systems (CIS) – something that is already being done in conjunction with West Anglia Great Northern. Other plans to extend the service include providing access to Live Departure Boards information through SMS text messages from mobile phones.

Demand for the new service has been growing steadily, and it is proving especially popular at times of disruption.

Chris Scoggins is enthusiastic about the potential for the use of other information channels. 'Right now, we are looking at making the service available through television,' he explains. 'Our call centres receive a lot of early-morning enquiries from people who are probably sitting at home with the TV on, so it makes sense to look at the practicalities of developing the service in that way.'

## HI-TECH ALARM SYSTEM

Callers to National Rail Enquiries can now receive up-to-the-minute information on train delays, thanks to a new piece of software that alerts contact centre operators when disruption occurs.

The system works by flashing up a warning icon on the journey planner used by contact centre staff when they attempt to access information about an affected route or service.

Clicking on the icon brings up a message showing the length and extent of delays.

National Rail Enquiries information flow manager, Jason Durk, says: 'Depending on what the customer wants, the new system can be used to access information about a specific train or services at one or more locations.'

Call centre operators can, in fact, read reports of disruption at any time, simply by clicking on the warning icon. When train services are severely hit, the icon flashes to alert operators that a blanket bulletin is on the system.

An engineering bulletin is also being used to highlight planned changes to the timetable that have not been entered in the train service database.



## CONTACT DETAILS

[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)  
[wap.nationalrail.co.uk](http://wap.nationalrail.co.uk)  
08457 484950

# Your first stop for train information

National Rail Enquiries has more ways than ever to help you plan your train journey...

- *Online journey planner – train times and fare information at your finger tips*
- *Live Departure Boards – a click of the mouse gives you up-to-the-minute train running information from every station in Britain*
- *Through your mobile – a train timetable and train running service using WAP technology*
- *Via the phone – 08457 48 49 50 is Britain's most used phone number with over 50 million callers a year receiving world-class service*

Plan your train journey with confidence – get in touch with National Rail Enquiries



Manchester Oxford Road

49 50

WAP updates

To	Timetabled Departure	Expected Departure
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