EMIRATES RAIL

It was announced from London on 2nd November that Lloyd’s Register EMEA had been appointed by Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the UAE’s national railway, as the independent safety assessor (ISA) for the extensive 1,200-kilometre rail line to be constructed across the region, stretching from the Arabian Gulf to the Indian Ocean.

As the ISA, Lloyd’s Register will help to ensure the safety of passengers, operating staff and members of the public at every stage of the railway’s development, from design through to the commencement of stage-one freight services in 2014 and the addition of passenger services during stages two and three.

Mike Elliott, Middle East Rail Business Manager for Lloyd’s Register, said the award reinforced the organisation’s position as a leading independent safety assessor in the Middle East, having fulfilled similar roles recently for the Dubai Metro, the Al Mashaaer Al Mugaddassah Metro in Mecca and the Personal Rapid Transport system at Masdar City, Abu Dhabi.

“Following our work in Dubai, Mecca and Abu Dhabi, we have built a strong understanding of the safety processes that support the planning, implementation and commissioning of new railways in the Middle East, experience that will be invaluable to this project,” Elliott, who will be leading the ISA team, said. He added, “We will be able to make an immediate contribution to the project and draw from the knowledge of our global pool of experts during each stage of its development.”

Lloyd’s Register, renown for its risk-management expertise, will conduct full assessments and audits of the engineering system’s safety plans, processes, activities and documentation during the design, manufacture, installation, testing and trial operations. The assessment also will cover the operator’s performance once services commence.

The railway is expected to form the backbone of a new national network linking the region’s principal industrial and commercial centres. It also will be an important part of the proposed 2,000-kilometre Gulf Railway that will connect the six member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council: UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait.
This route mainly will be double-tracked and open to passenger and freight use. Passenger services are expected to reach speeds of up to 200km/h, while the twin-stack container freight services will offer a maximum speed of 120km/h.

Developed in three stages, the first will provide freight services between Shah and the port of Ruwais, and is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2014. The construction of stages two and three will add passenger services and ultimately connect the main cities of the UAE.

Lloyd’s Register’s team already have begun work on stage one and will continue to provide technical advice and oversight until the project’s completion in 2017.

In conclusion Elliott said, “Constructing a new railway is a major undertaking in any part of the world, but the combination of the extreme climate, the desert terrain, the absence of an established rail industry and a developing regulatory regime add to the challenges of delivering major rail-infrastructure projects in the Middle East. The experience we have gained with projects such as the Dubai Metro will be vital and, I am sure, help us to provide independent advice to our client during some of the key decisions that lie ahead.”

Etihad Rail was established in June 2009 under Federal Law No. 2, with a mandate to manage the development, construction and operation of the UAE’s national freight and passenger railway network. Built to international standards, Etihad Rail’s state-of-the-art network will act as a catalyst for economic growth and sustained social development. Once complete, the railway will redefine logistics and transport in the region, providing a modern, safe, efficient, sustainable network that will connect all regions of the UAE, and the UAE to its wider GCC neighbours.