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Bridges under SŽDC Administration Are Safe

Railway transport safety in the Czech Republic is not endangered by the state of railway bridges. The majority of bridge constructions is managed by Správa železniční dopravní cesty (SŽDC) which regularly controls them, assures their diagnostics, maintenance, repairs and in many cases modernization as well.

SŽDC assures the administration of 6,751 bridges and 18,236 culverts (bridge constructions with an inside diameter up to 2m). The age of these constructions often corresponds to the time of railway lines' construction, i.e. 1865 - 1910. Professional bridges' and tunnels' administrations operating at each Regional Directorate are responsible for their maintenance.

"I would like to stress that the whole system of railway bridges' management is based on long-term experience of our specialists. With their use, we set quite precise regulations for inspections and subsequent registers of railway bridges. We can see this system has proven useful as during the whole existence of SŽDC, it was never necessary to stop train operation on a railway line due to an unsatisfactory state of a railway bridge", states Mr. Jiří Svoboda, Director General of SŽDC

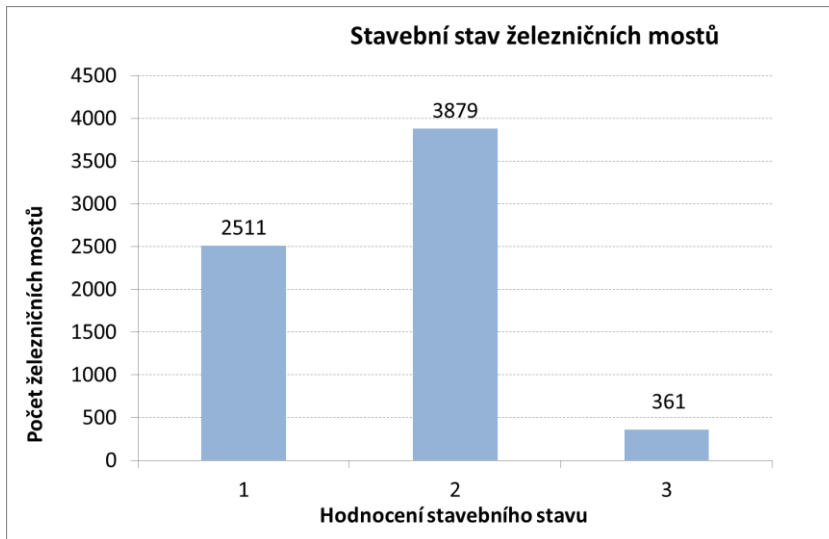
The total construction state of bridges or their selected parts is evaluated by a three-grade scale:

- **Grade 1** – The construction requires normal maintenance only;
- **Grade 2** – The construction requires repairs outside normal maintenance, e.g. complete renewal of painting, a local exchange of sleepers (bridge bearers), possibly repairing or exchanging some parts which could lead to operation restrictions;
- **Grade 3** – The construction requires a building intervention, e.g. reconstruction of abutments, repairing or exchanging some parts the state of which could cause operation restrictions.

Grade 3 classification does not necessarily mean a state of emergency or result in an immediate restriction of some infrastructure parameters (speed, capacity etc.) and such a classification cannot represent danger to railway operation safety. In case a bridge construction would be in a state of emergency, railway operation would be stopped immediately and an intervention for operation renewal would be carried out without delay

For the infrastructure manager, Grade 3 is a classification which obligates him to undertake steps for assuring repairs or reconstruction of the bridge in a middle-term time horizon.

As shown by the chart hereunder, only about 5% of all bridges on the SŽDC network are in Construction Grade 3.



Legend:

Stavební stav železniční mostů – Construction state of railway bridges

Počet železničních mostů – Number of railway bridges

Hodnocení stavebního stavu - Construction state evaluation

In the last years, the number of bridges classified by Grade 3 remains approximately the same within a number of 360. This however does not mean that SŽDC would not deal with their state continuously. Every year, the number of bridge constructions being repaired or modernized is similar to the number of bridges decreasing from Grade 2 to Grade 3 due to a downgrade of their construction state.

“At present, the SŽDC investment plan includes dozens of separate constructions dealing with bridges’ reconstructions with total costs exceeding CZK 4 million. Thus sum also includes the Negrelli viaduct in Prague with total costs amounting to CZK 1.5 billion”, says Mr. Svoboda, adding that SŽDC deals with reconstructions of other bridge constructions on modernized line sections within the framework of extensive investments.

The repairs’ plan draft for next year takes into account separate solutions of this state for 60 bridge constructions with an estimated sum of CZK 200 million. A similar sum will be allocated for standard maintenance and repairs.

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