

Overlooking the world's tallest bridge



At 343 metres from valley bottom to the highest point, the stunning new viaduct across the Tarn valley near Millau in southern France is the tallest road bridge in the world. Designed by UK architects Foster and Partners, and French bridge engineer Michel Virlogeux, this cable-stayed bridge carrying the A75 completed the continuous motorway link from Paris to Barcelona. The bridge and its associated toll plaza has been financed and built by French construction group Eiffage at a cost of around €400m, a sum which Eiffage will recoup from tolls during its 75-year operating concession. To ensure that its customers cross the 2.46 km span safely and smoothly without let or hindrance, it monitors the site with GEUTEBRÜCK CCTV and Citilog traffic detection systems.

The bridge itself carries two traffic lanes and a hard shoulder in each direction, but at the toll plaza 6 km north of the bridge, the lanes increase to 14 in each direction, or 18 when necessary, to keep the traffic flowing freely. The bridge and plaza are monitored by 64 GEUTEBRÜCK cameras feeding pictures to a ViCros modular matrix and four MultiScope II plus/4x4 digital CCTV systems set up for permanent recording. The use of broadcast bandwidths ensures excellent quality pictures, while support for fast searching, synchronous replay of multiple camera channels even with different recording rates, and integrated intelligent text insertion, provides traffic managers with the perfect overview of the whole location from all angles at the same time.

Any incidents at the toll plaza - a driver driving through the barrier without stopping, or a malfunctioning pre-payment card, or a driver who calls the control centre from a call point - are detected by third party systems and reported to the management system which automatically instructs the matrix to switch the relevant camera pictures to the control centre for managers' attention.

At the same time all camera signals from the plaza and the bridge are analysed by the Citilog traffic detection system which then reports irregularities such as stationary vehicles, pedestrians on the carriageway, congestion, accidents, wrong-way drivers etc. to the control centre. This enables managers to respond quickly with appropriate assistance, remove hazards and generally keep the traffic flowing safely.

Another noteworthy safety feature is the three-metre tall transparent windbreak which is only visible at close range. It protects vehicles on the bridge, whilst maintaining the elegant appearance of the structure and affording excellent visibility for cameras and drivers alike. [•]

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