

Press Release

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Image caption: Semmmco/Zacher access steps and platforms increase safety of workers at height.

Semmmco Steps Up Safety for Top Airlines

Revolutionary Access Steps & Operating Platform Ensures Safety & Regulatory Compliance for Virgin & BMI Aircraft Maintenance Teams Working at Heights



The Surrey-based design and engineering specialist, Semmmco Ltd has brought unprecedented levels of safety and accessibility to ground support staff undertaking essential maintenance of aircraft, via a state of the art access solution comprising adjustable aluminum steps and operating platform. Leading carriers Virgin Atlantic Airways and bmi (British Midland International) have recently deployed multiple Semmmco solutions to ensure compliance with increasingly stringent directives whilst enabling staff to carry out their work efficiently.

The Work At Heights Regulations 2005 place new legal responsibilities on employers to ensure that equipment (such as ladders and platforms) used to facilitate working at any height above ground level minimises the risk of falling and offers sufficient protection to workers. Falls are the biggest cause of death in the workplace, accounting for 67 fatal accidents and nearly 400 major injuries in 2003/4. Colin Wehrle, Health & Safety & Environmental Risk Advisor at Virgin Atlantic Airways, places these risks within the context of the aviation industry by explaining “The traditional method for accessing elevated parts of the aircraft, such as the cargo hold and working under engine cowls, had been via a set of standard steps developed over 20 years ago and which no longer meet the safety standards of today. This combined with the environmental hazards posed by engine oil and grease or high winds, working at heights of up to 3 metres



could put our engineers at risk from falling – this was an extremely difficult risk to manage and justify from an organisational safety perspective.”

As well as providing a much safer working environment for the Virgin Atlantic team, the relationship with Semmco has also been mutually beneficial in terms of new product development, as Colin comments “Working with Semmco to develop an alternative solution for working at heights has delivered many benefits, and, as a niche company with such a good working knowledge of the airline industry, they were able to respond very precisely to our requirements. The cargo access steps & platforms with their adjustable height feature means that the steps can be used across the fleet of 747 400s, A340 600s and A340 300s to gain safe access to the cargo hold area and our 5 sets of Semmco steps are in use at Virgin Atlantic sites across Gatwick, Heathrow and even as far afield as Lagos in Nigeria. The lightweight construction of the steps means that they can be wheeled out to the aircraft for in situ maintenance by just one person, reducing the amount of manpower needed to carry out work at heights. We’re now excited about the new product we’re devising with Semmco to improve access to the engine area of the fleet.”

Echoing Virgin Atlantic’s experience of working with Semmco, Nigel Reynolds, Principal Controller at bmi’s London Heathrow base, says “Safety is paramount in every aspect of bmi’s operations, from our passengers, to flight deck and through to our team who are ultimately responsible for the air-worthiness of the aircraft. As well as liking the Semmco products, which are in operation in our main hangar at London Heathrow, I also liked their pro-active attitude towards service and back-up. In our industry, an AOG (Aircraft on Ground) is a huge financial drain and Semmco fully appreciate the pressure we’re under to get issues resolved as quickly as possible, without compromising the safety of our team or quality of our service.

With the bmi team using the steps up to a height of 5 m when working on a 747, Nigel says that “the design of the steps has made life easier and accessing the aircraft safer – even for potentially intricate jobs for example replacing APUs (Auxilliary Power Units) on the A320 where we can now bring the Semmco platform as well as the access steps into use.”

The Semmco range of lightweight, compact and variable access steps and platforms are easy to use, environmentally friendly and also have an anti-skid surfacing. Made from high-grade



aluminum, the design enables various modifications and expansions for specific customer requirements. As well as being ideal for use within the aviation industry, where Semmmco have an unrivalled reputation, these versatile and robust safety solutions lend themselves perfectly to any situation where a maintenance team is required to work at height.

Visit the Semmmco team on stand J40, Hall 10 at Safety & Health Expo.

For more information, please visit www.semmmco.com or email carolyn@mconieagency.com.

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THE MCONIE AGENCY

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