

Press Release

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Image caption: Semmco/Zacher access steps and platforms increase safety for workers at height.

Full Steam Ahead for Semmco Ltd & Southern Railways

Made to Measure Roof Access Gantry Ensures Health & Safety Compliance For Train Maintenance Crews Working at Heights



Leading rail operator Southern Railways has recently deployed a Semmco Ltd solution to improve safety and accessibility for crews undertaking essential maintenance and repair work on air conditioning units and windows sited on the roofs of coaches. Reflecting an on-going commitment to upholding the highest standards of safety in all areas of their operations, Southern were keen to work with a design-led engineering partner to develop an access solution which provided a secure and productive working environment.

Semmco has a proven track record in the transport industry, having worked with top airlines such as BMI and Virgin Atlantic Airways to facilitate safer environments for ground staff working on jets at heights of up to 5m. This experience put them in good stead to assist Southern Railways, as John Poulton, Southern Railways' Safety & Quality Manager, explains "My team is under pressure to turn round jobs as quickly as possible, with financial penalties being imposed by the leasing companies for excess time which the carriages are out of service. The Semmco platform means we can complete work on an entire 12 car train within a couple of hours as it will hold 4 people at a time, as opposed to operatives on individual motorised scissor lifts which could take up to a day to do the same amount of work. The work we complete at heights of 12



to 14 feet using the Semmco/Zacher steps and platform is not only safer – it's also cleaner and quicker.”

The requirement for a robust access solution for maintenance crews is especially pertinent in light of current legislation regarding working at heights. 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 minimizes 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.

The modular roof access gantry solution was constructed on site to reside permanently across one of the maintenance bays within Southern Railway's Brighton depot, and is designed to service their new 377 class of trains. The structure comprises two vertical sides (one with access steps), leading to a horizontal top platform which enables up to 4 staff wearing safety harnesses to access a large area of the roof of a train at the same time. As work is completed on one area of the roof, the lightweight structure, which effectively 'wraps around' the carriages, can be simply wheeled down the bay to access another area of the body of the train. The platform has been built with many long-term uses in mind, as well as its principal purpose of providing access to change air conditioning unit filters and roof lights [windows], thus bringing fresher air and more light to passengers. “Southern endeavours to give their passengers the best possible travel experience, so the Semmco access platform will also come into its own when installing and maintaining small rubber roof-mounted aerials to give passengers constant mobile phone reception as well as connectivity to the internet and e-mail” comments John.

John describes Semmco's approach to customer service and interpreting Southern's safety and operational requirements as “Faultless. Semmco are nice people to work with and really understood our business and the risks we seek to minimize from the outset. Partnering with Semmco has certainly given us a better way of working.”

By teaming up with the German manufacturer Zacher, Semmco has brought a complete range of lightweight, compact and variable access steps and platforms to the UK health and safety marketplace. All products are environmentally friendly and are made from high-grade aluminium. The modular design enables various modifications and expansions for specific



customer requirements today and in the future. As well as being ideal for use within the rail and aviation industries, these versatile and robust safety solutions lend themselves perfectly to any situation where a maintenance team is required to work at height.

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

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

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THE MCONIE AGENCY

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