



PRESS RELEASE: Tail Dock Success for Semmco & bmi



Made to measure A320 tail docking system from Semmco proves instrumental in the implementation of bmi's equalised maintenance programme. This unique engineered solution has saved the cost of an entire plane over a 12-month period due to reduction in aircraft downtime. In addition the A320 tail dock has improved safety for aircraft engineering staff working at heights.

Award-winning¹ UK airline bmi has adopted a programme of equalised maintenance on its entire fleet of 23 Airbus A320, working with specialist engineering company, Semmco, to design and produce a customised tail docking access solution that enables the aircraft engineering staff to carry out fin and rudder inspections within stringent timeframes without compromising safety.

Equalising maintenance means undertaking programmed maintenance more efficiently through continual on-going maintenance programmes throughout the year, rather than all-in-one 'blocked out' time for full 'C' checks which traditionally means a plane being on the ground [OTG] for a full 5 days per year. As Terry Dudley, Maintenance Manager bmi LHR, explains "For equalised maintenance to be effective, the engineers have to be able to get to work as soon as the plane arrives in the hanger, working in a time slot of 8 hours during the night when the plane is not in use means every minute needs to be used productively. The Semmco tail docking solution is in two sections, which in effect clasps around the tail section of the plane to allow the engineers access to this section of the aircraft within 15 minutes of it arriving in the hanger. Prior to this, the aircraft would be towed into position using a tug which was time consuming and also left margin for driver error which could result in damage to the aircraft – especially as the wide fin needed to be reversed into a relatively small area. The Semmco tail dock keeps us fully in control of the aircraft preparation process."

The tail dock solution consists of access steps and a platform that supports work at four different height levels between 8 ft and 30 ft. Built on a steel base, the aluminium construction of the frame and platform makes the tail dock light enough to be easily maneuvered to suit varied maintenance requirements.

“The tail docking solution was purchased specifically to enable bmi to adopt a programme of equalised maintenance, which was devised in close consultation with Airbus” says Terry. “It has changed the process of maintenance on the entire A320 fleet. Before there were approximately 26 planes, each requiring a week’s maintenance, which equates to effectively a whole plane being out of service each year. The block release also saw duplication of effort, as parts would be dismantled, inspected and re-built, only to be dismantled again later in the week as part of another area being inspected.”

Stuart McOnie, Managing Director of Semmco was honored to work with bmi as an instrumental partner in the successful adoption of equalised maintenance, having previously worked with bmi to develop other access solutions. “For bmi, safety is paramount in all areas of their operations so we designed the tail docking solution with safety as well as practicality and ease of use in mind. Terry and his team knew exactly what tasks they were required to carry out, and we made this possible by creating a flexible and safe platform from which they can easily access the tail section of the aircraft.”

Summing up the impact the tail docking solution has had on the ground maintenance staff, Terry says “The tail docking solution has been fundamental in the successful implementation of equalised maintenance. I have been impressed with how solid the structure is, and also pleased with the engineering staff’s positive reaction to this new piece of equipment. It has made their jobs not only easier, but safer, and now that’s just the way we do things.”

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 45 deaths and 3351 injuries in 2006/07². Expansion of the aviation industry has brought new health and safety challenges as aircraft turn-around times are reduced, there is increasing competition for space at airports, and there are global pressures on the industry for ever-increasing efficiencies. Activities on the ground airside and during aircraft turn-around are the most hazardous, with falls from heights and workplace transport incidents causing the majority of air transport related accidents reported to HSE.

By teaming up with German partner 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 an engineering maintenance team is required to work at height.

Visit the Semmco team on stand no. F80/2.

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

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¹ Bmi has received over 50 industry awards since 1990, including: 14 times consecutive winner of Best UK Domestic Airline (Travel Weekly), Short Haul Business Airline (Business Travel World), Best Domestic Leisure Airline (Conde Nast), Best European Airline (Irish Travel Trade News)

² Source: HSE www.hse.gov.uk/falls/statistics.htm

If you would like to use the photograph or information from this press release, please contact Lynda Hughes at The McOnie Agency: Tel: 01483 237230. Fax: 01483 237234. Email: lynda@mconieagency.com.

If you would like further information, please contact Rachael Meyer at The McOnie Agency on 01423 522363 or email rachael@mconieagency.com.

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