

PRESS RELEASE

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**NEW TAIL DOCKING SYSTEM IMPROVES
SAFETY FOR ENGINEERS WORKING AT HEIGHT**

Specialist engineering firm Semmmco last night unleashed its new tail docking system (pictured), which has already saved award-winning UK airline bmi the cost of a plane over 12 months of use (see case study below), and improved safety for engineers working at height.

At a lavish ceremony held at the Jurys Inn Hotel, Heathrow Airport – and later inside bmi's Heathrow hangar – Semmmco Managing Director Stuart McOnie unveiled the impressive-looking structure to luminaries from the Press and airline industry.

The system, that literally encases the aircraft tail, consists of access steps and a platform, enabling engineers to work at four different height levels, from 8 to 30ft. Built on a steel base, the aluminium construction of the frame and platform makes the tail dock light enough to be easily manoeuvred to suit varied maintenance requirements.

'Expansion of the aviation industry in recent years has brought new health and safety challenges - with aircraft turnaround times reduced, increasing competition for space at airports and global pressures on the industry for ever-increasing efficiencies,' said Stuart.

'This is reflected in the fact that the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) receives about 40 reported incidents of air transport industry staff injuring themselves after falling from height every year – many of them occurring airside aircraft maintenance, with a significant proportion of the most serious happening during aircraft turnaround.

'We hope that our tail docking system – and our other aircraft access solutions – will improve these statistics considerably and help make such injuries a thing of the past,' said Stuart.

Bmi Engineering Director, Stuart Green, was full of praise for the new system: 'Semmcoco has created the perfect docking solution – it really is exceptional! It has also been a great pleasure working with the Semmcoco team.'

The Work at Heights Regulations 2005 placed 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.

Another of Semmcoco's access solutions – its variable height steps – have been shortlisted for Innovation of the Year at this year's *Safety & Health Practitioner* IOSH awards.

Case study: bmi

Award-winning UK airline, bmi, purchased the tail docking solution to enable it to adopt a programme of 'equalised maintenance' – a method of carrying out aircraft maintenance on an ongoing basis, rather than 'blocking out' time every year for a full maintenance check (which traditionally meant a plane was on the ground – and not making money – for a full five days a year).

'Semmcoco's system has changed the process of maintenance on the entire A320 fleet,' says bmi Engineering Director, Stuart Green. '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.'

'Also, for equalised maintenance to be effective, the engineers have to be able to get to work as soon as the plane arrives in the hangar,' he says. 'Semmcoco's solution, which in effect clasps around the tail section of the plane, allows engineers access to this section of the aircraft within 15 minutes of the plane arriving in the hangar.'

Prior to using the Semmcoco solution, the aircraft would be towed into position using a tug. 'This was not only time consuming,' says Stuart, 'but it 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 docking solution has been fundamental in the successful implementation of equalised maintenance for bmi,’ says Stuart. ‘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.’

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.

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