

FirstClass Safety & Control: ready to lead the way

May 9, 2022



FirstClass Safety & Control has more than weathered the storm of recent times – it has delivered top-tier depot protection and control systems across the globe. Now, with exciting plans for growth coming to fruition, they look to a future that delivers SIL-certified solutions in a world where rail safety is more important than ever.

FirstClass Safety & Control was born from two things. The first was Mark Meyrick's decision to initiate a management buyout of Beck and Pollitzer's control system division. The second was the strong team that moved with him as part of this process; they had worked together since 1998. With an excellent understanding of each other's capabilities and a track record for instinctive teamwork, Mark knew they were well prepared for an ever-more challenging safety landscape.

The new business made several strides immediately. It earned a wide range of accreditations, including RISQS, putting it prominently on the rail industry radar and winning it major contracts.

But to begin a venture this bold, Mark and the others would need to have an extra quality to help them stand out, and they did: multi-industry experience. Both now and in the Beck and Pollitzer days, the team

has worked in very demanding, very safety-sensitive industries, such as oil, automotive, marine, and food and beverage. All this extra know-how, gleaned from these incredibly sensitive sectors, would inform their approach to rail and meant they were a leading force in designing and fitting SIL-rated depot systems.

Delivering for depots

“No two rail depot projects are ever the same,” said Mark, whose entire career has always been rooted in safety. “Who we work with varies each time. We help anyone from construction teams to operators. We can design a completely new system, deliver an upgrade or make sure legacy equipment remains in good condition until modernisation is an option.”

But there is one thing that always remains the same for **FirstClass Safety & Control**: the team sets out to address a client’s problem rather than offering a fixed, off-the-shelf solution. Its multi-skilled staff make sure both hardware and software are to a depot’s requirements and that they are a perfect fit for its staff.

“We provide detailed reports to our clients so that not only do they see what they are getting in terms of their systems, but they can appreciate the level of understanding our team has in this field,” Mark said.

“Our team brings with it a vast amount of experience, so they can work from specifications if the depot is not constructed yet, or put boots on the ground to understand, first-hand, what is needed.”

This expertise was fully utilised during the height of COVID-19 restrictions when the team was setting up a system in Australia. They had a specialist walk around the site – thousands of miles away – wearing Google Glass. These smart glasses fed the images back, in real-time, to their colleagues in the UK so that a system could be devised to the client’s requirements.

Australia is just one destination where FirstClass Safety & Control have delivered solutions for depots. It has worked with familiar names operating in the UK, such as GWR, C2C and Blackpool Transport, and overseas with companies like Etihad in Abu Dhabi.

From strength to strength

A growing client base is not the only exciting development for the depot protection and control systems business. Now, **FirstClass Safety** is officially a family business: Mark’s son, Sam, has joined the team and trained up to be a control systems engineer.

For Mark, this is a moment to look back as well as forward: “To get to where we are now, four and a bit years down the road, and to be successful means a lot.

“We were able to get through the effects of Brexit and COVID-19 looking very much the same as we had before that. With all that the industry and the wider world has been through, we have also got to this point with funds behind us and no need to go find additional money to keep the business afloat.

“The best thing is I’ve got a great team around me with fantastic support. That support is there all the time, through easy times and the more demanding. Their advice is good, and not just for our clients but for

me as well.

“Now we have exciting times ahead of us. We’re looking for bigger, better premises – and continuing to look to Europe and further afield to tender for work which will complement our UK client base.

“Our aim at this point is to ensure we are the business of choice, nationally and internationally, for outstanding depot safety and control systems.

“We have a global reach, but **FirstClass Safety & Control** began in the UK. The UK takes health and safety incredibly seriously, and on the back of that ethos, **First Class Safety**, and the industry partners it works with, are more than ready to lead the way.”