

Zonegreen shines light on need for sidings safety

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Rail safety specialist Zonegreen is extending the protection offered to staff at a West Sussex depot where there is a growing need to undertake work outside.

The Sheffield-based firm has installed warning beacons on a busy walkway crossing at the Three Bridges facility near Crawley, to alert workers to imminent train movements.

Post-mounted beacons have been erected outside the wheel lathe building and main shed and are integrated with Zonegreen's flagship Depot Personnel Protection System (DPPS), which was implemented during the depot's construction in 2017. They illuminate when the tracks are unprotected to warn staff who may be passing that moving vehicles are expected.

Christian Fletcher, Zonegreen's head of engineering, said: "Depot operator, Siemens, asked us to install the beacons to reflect the growing amount of work taking place on sidings and stabling roads at Three

Bridges. These areas were never intended to be used for maintenance, so they typically carry little or no protection, yet due to increased demand and finite internal space, working practises are changing.

“When sidings roads are being used for maintenance, staff usually have to cross multiple tracks to reach the location, creating a whole new set of risks for depots to consider. We welcome the foresight Siemens has shown in implementing additional safety measures and I am sure we’ll see many other facilities following suit, as throughput expectations increase.”

The Office of Road and Rail reported that 2020/21 saw the highest number of recorded near misses at level crossings for almost 20 years and the picture does not seem to be improving. According to the organisation’s latest Annual Report of Health and Safety on Britain’s Railways, the average amount of accidents at level crossings had worsened by 15.9% by the end of 2022.

Christian concluded: “The risks posed by crossings continue to be a major concern for the rail industry. When combined with the dangers depot staff already face from high voltage electricity and powerful machinery, it is clear more action needs to be taken to protect those who find themselves working outside.”

Zonegreen’s latest version of DPPS is the most advanced, thoroughly tested and proven technology on the market – a product of more than 20 years’ research and experience. It protects depot staff by controlling vehicle movements, creating safe zones for workers through the installation of powered derailleurs, operated by RFID-controlled road end panels.

For more information about DPPS or Zonegreen’s wide range of depot safety equipment, telephone (0114) 230 0822, visit www.zonegreen.co.uk or follow the firm on Twitter, @zonegreen.