zone green
safe working solutions

Things are steaming rapidly ahead...
are all depots keeping up?

Some rail maintenance depots seem to look, and operate, as if they are still in the steam age. All very quaint, but how efficient are they, and even more important, how safe are they for depot staff?

Health and Safety Executives statistics for 2017/18 reveal that 144 people were killed at work in the UK that year and over 71,062 injuries were reported under RIDDOR. It is difficult to obtain a precise figure of the cost of a fatality, but in addition to the unquantifiably enormous cost of human grief and suffering, when considering the cost of legal proceedings, medical and emergency services charges, associated damage to equipment, loss of production and insurance costs, then a seven figure sum is not unreasonable.

So clearly it is vital in both human and financial contexts that everything possible must be done to reduce these risks, especially when severe hazards such as moving trains and high voltage equipment are present in the workplace.

Train movements within a depot are an obvious occupational hazard in the rail industry. Research carried out by the Rail Safety Standards board in the Halcrow Report looked into the course of collisions and accidents relating to train movements in maintenance depots, reviewing 880 incidents taken from information gathered in relation to 28 depots during a seven year period.

The need for infrastructure improvements

The report looked at various potential factors, but interestingly found age of depot to be the most statistically significant contributory factor. The RSSB report shows that depots built within the last 20 years are found to have reported significantly fewer accidents than their older counterparts.

Over the past two decades, depot infrastructure has undergone changes which have clearly made a positive impact on safety. Better lighting arrangements, communication systems, access points, switches/crossings, signal sighting, fouling points and SPAD traps all contribute to increased safety.