

## What is HSE's role in helicopter safety?



Recent offshore helicopter incidents on the UKCS, one of which involved the tragic loss of life, have raised questions about HSE's role in helicopter safety.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is responsible for regulating aviation legislation, namely the airworthiness and operational safety of the helicopter and its passengers. HSE regulates health and safety law and specific requirements relate to offshore helidecks and helideck operations. HSE inspections of offshore installations include all aspects of health and safety, including helidecks and helideck operations.

While HSE and CAA work closely together on all aspects of helicopter safety, responsibility for the actual achievement of safety rests with everyone, including:

- helicopter operators;
- flight crews;
- HLOs;
- installation operators; and
- the offshore workforce.

HSE has published a leaflet entitled *How offshore helicopter travel is regulated* INDG219(rev1). Copies are at all UK heliports and also at: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg219.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg219.pdf).

## Further information

### GENERAL HSE ENQUIRIES

HSE Infoline:  
Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566  
e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com)

### WEB-BASED INFORMATION

HSE's offshore safety home page at:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/offshore](http://www.hse.gov.uk/offshore)

*Some useful offshore leaflets can be downloaded free from the HSE website.*

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We would like to know what you think of this news sheet – send your comments and ideas for future editions to:  
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Lord Cullen House, Fraser Place, Aberdeen AB25 3UB  
e-mail: [osd.tnews@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:osd.tnews@hse.gsi.gov.uk)

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# Tea-shack News

HSE's news sheet for offshore workers

Issue 10 **Aug 2009**



Installation integrity  
so far so good

# Installation integrity - so far so good

## KP3 review

In November 2007, HSE published a report detailing the findings of a programme of targeted inspections – KP3. These inspections looked at asset integrity and the maintenance of safety critical elements (SCEs) on over 100 installations. The report identified a number of concerns and challenges for the offshore industry. It showed a need to make improvements in areas such as asset integrity/process safety management, physical state of the plant, safety critical system performance, safety leadership, role of the engineering function, cross industry learning and human resource and competence.

In July 2008, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Piper Alpha Disaster, the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, James Purnell, commissioned HSE to review the progress made by the offshore industry in addressing the improvements identified in the KP3 report. In addition, HSE was also asked to review **worker involvement** in offshore safety.

The review of industry's progress has just been completed and was published on 14 July. The report can be found at: [www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/kp3review.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/kp3review.pdf).

## What did the review find?

The review found that considerable progress had been made but that the task was not complete. It is essential that progress is sustained and HSE will be monitoring the position closely, particularly in the current economic climate to ensure safety is not compromised.

## What about worker involvement – you?

HSE asked the cross industry Workforce Involvement Group (WIG) to undertake a review of workforce involvement. The WIG found evidence of increasing workforce involvement but also identified a number of areas where improvements are needed. The WIG report, which is Annex 5 in the KP3 review, can be found at: [www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/iacs/oiac/wig.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/iacs/oiac/wig.htm).

Recommendations include:

- increased awareness across all levels of management about the role of safety representatives and committees;
- a review of the application and effectiveness of the statutory framework (SI 971) governing safety representatives and committees;
- a review of training for safety representatives; and
- additional research to inform the effectiveness of workforce involvement and consultation.

HSE also commissioned an independent survey of the offshore workforce. WIG and some 3800 workers participated at heliports during March 2009. Thanks are extended to all of those who participated in this valuable exercise. The survey aimed to seek workforce views on:

- how health and safety is managed, especially as far as asset integrity and major hazard potential is concerned and what role the workforce play in health and safety management; and
- the methods of communication that work best for HSE in trying to access the offshore workforce (and vice versa).

The results revealed progress has been made in the areas of safety culture and workforce involvement in safety. However, the survey also showed that consultation on safety cases could be improved. Renewed efforts are required by industry to effectively consult the workforce about major hazards and the barriers employed to prevent them. More also needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of safety representatives and safety committees.

HSE learned a lot from the survey about how effectively it communicates with workers offshore. HSE will now use the information provided to further improve communication. One immediate change because of the survey's findings is the introduction of a workforce-specific internet webpage. This can be found at: [www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/workinvolvement.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/workinvolvement.htm).

## Improved offshore safety performance in 2008/09

A preliminary review of RIDDOR reportable injuries and dangerous occurrences shows a welcomed improvement for 2008/09. For the second year running, there were no fatalities reported and the number of major injuries (30) was at an all time low since HSE became responsible for offshore regulation. Over-three-day injuries also showed a small reduction over the previous year to 140 with the rate of injuries at a new low.

Major and significant hydrocarbon releases (61) showed a significant reduction compared to previous years. While this is good news, early indicators for 2009/10 have been less encouraging and achieving targets for 2009/10 may be challenging. Real improvements only come from sustained reduction in leaks throughout the year. It remains essential that the industry continue to focus on reducing leaks through sustained good management and supervision, competence, training, risk awareness and the application of safe systems of work.

The industry must continue to work hard to maintain a consistently low level of leaks, other incidents and injuries to capitalise on improvements gained so far in incident numbers.

The full HSE offshore statistics bulletin can be found at: [www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/statistics.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/offshore/statistics.htm).

# Helicopter passenger personal locator beacons (PLBs)

Following the Super Puma crash near ETAP on 18 February, when thankfully nobody was seriously injured, it became clear that the low power PLBs worn by the passengers interfered with the higher power locator beacons on the aircraft life rafts, which hampered the airborne search and rescue effort.

Although recovery of all personnel involved was carried out within the accepted performance standards, it was felt that the use of passenger PLBs should be temporarily suspended. Since then the helicopter operators, the CAA, Oil and Gas UK and HSE have been working closely together to resolve this issue.

Agreement has now been reached on replacing the life raft beacons with ones that will be unaffected by PLBs transmitting in their vicinity and this replacement programme should be completed over the next few months. Good progress has also been made on identifying suitable passenger PLBs that could be reintroduced after the life raft beacons have been replaced and work is ongoing into compatibility issues with the other PPE worn during helicopter travel. Oil and Gas UK has a Helicopter Task Group where further updates are available. This can be found at: [www.oilandgasuk.co.uk/issues/helitaskgroup.cfm](http://www.oilandgasuk.co.uk/issues/helitaskgroup.cfm).