I am, as yet, an unfamiliar face to many of you. As the recently appointed HSE Head of Energy Division responsible for the regulation of the UK Offshore Industry, I am acutely aware of the impact the Piper Alpha disaster caused and the painful memories which will forever remain for the relatives who lost loved ones and for the survivors whose lives were tragically affected. On the 25th anniversary, I feel it is also appropriate to remember other workers who have died or been seriously injured in offshore accidents.

The UK has a mature goal-setting regulatory regime which was built on the lessons learned from Piper Alpha. These regulations have stood the test of time and are, I believe, valued not only in the UK but seen internationally as a model worthy of adopting. More recently the House of Commons Select Committee which looked into the implications for UK deepwater drilling following the Gulf of Mexico disaster concluded that “the UK has high offshore regulatory standards as exemplified by the Safety Case Regulations - based on flexible goal setting principles”.

However, as the regulator, we are in no doubt that for all of us there is still much to be achieved. Serious incidents such as hydrocarbon releases still occur. As the regulator we continue to put pressure on the UK industry to carry on delivering improvements we expect to see and in which it has committed to achieve.

The offshore industry must continue to embrace a safety culture that enables the workforce to contribute to health and safety, **this is your legal right**. Forums such as Step Change and OIAC remain important in ensuring that industry and HSE as the regulator keep this safety culture high on the industry agenda, and I am pleased there have been significant strides recently in improving this. The Step Change Workforce Engagement Tool has now gone live (http://www.stepchangeinsafety.net/about/workgroups/WorkforceEngagementToolkit.cfm). The OIAC Workforce Involvement Group (WIG) has worked with OPITO to produce a new standard for offshore safety representatives training as a means of improving and enhancing the understanding and aptitude the safety representative can utilise. The first training courses to that new standard have already been completed.

Offshore workers are elected by their workmates under the Offshore Installations (Safety Representatives and Safety Committees) Regulations 1989. Independent of management, they can investigate potential hazards, dangerous occurrences, complaints and the causes of accidents as well as conduct inspections of installations.

I encourage you all to be aware of the role you can play and recognise the regulatory powers your Safety Representative has and can play in the safety of installations.

**Susan Mackenzie, Head of Energy Division**

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**Where to go for more information**

**General HSE enquiries/Web-based information**

Please go to HSE’s offshore safety home page at: www.hse.gov.uk/offshore

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:

**Tea-shack News, Health and Safety Executive, Lord Cullen House, Fraser Place, Aberdeen AB25 3UB**

email: tnews@hse.gsi.gov.uk
WHAT HAPPENED: 167 LIVES LOST
Piper Alpha Disaster, 6th July 1988

Many of you entering the industry now will be too young to remember the Piper Alpha disaster. This large North Sea Oil Platform was destroyed by a series of explosions and a fire that engulfed the platform and took the lives of 167 people. Those of you in the industry at the time will remember the terrible impact the tragedy had, and its influence remains today.

As a result of the disaster, a Public Inquiry chaired by Lord Cullen, was set up to identify the causes of the disaster and what steps could be taken to prevent a similar occurrence. It became evident that a number of changes were needed to improve safety measures: from improvements to “permit to work” systems, relocation of some pipelines emergency shutdown valves and improvements to evacuation and escape systems.

All 106 recommendations made in the ‘Cullen Report’ were accepted by the industry, regulator and workforce. These recommendations had far reaching consequences for the industry and the regulator.

WHAT CHANGED

The responsibility for regulation of the UKCS industry was transferred from the Department of Energy to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The old-style prescriptive legislation was revoked and replaced by goal-setting regulations. In reality what this meant was that safety became the responsibility of those who create the risks. New attitudes to safety had to become an essential part of management responsibility, not seen as a bolt on extra.

The new safety regulations required the operator/owner of every fixed and mobile installation operating in UK waters to submit to the HSE, for their acceptance, a safety case. The safety case must give full details of the arrangements for managing health and safety and controlling major accidents hazards on the installation. It must demonstrate that the company has safety management systems in place, has identified risks and introduced management controls, provided a temporary safe refuge on the installation and has made provisions for safe evacuation and rescue.

The changes are still seen as overwhelmingly positive and have had a major impact on improving safety in the North Sea. This approach has stood the test of time and is being adopted as the model for others in Europe. However the North Sea and other offshore areas, remain very hazardous places to work. Even if lessons were learned it is important that they are remembered. Safety must remain a top priority for all of us. We must ensure that the lessons learnt from Piper Alpha are not forgotten.

As a stark reminder of the impact the Piper Alpha Disaster caused, you should visit the memorial to the men killed in the Piper Alpha disaster on 6 July 1988. It can be found in the Queen Mother’s Rose Garden in Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen.

Piper 25 Workforce Involvement Day
19th June 2013

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, Step Change in Safety and the Health and Safety Executive are jointly running a Workforce Involvement Day at the Aberdeen AECC. The event is free of charge.

The day will be driven by the workforce for the workforce and bring together 500 delegates to reflect on the tragedy, share the lessons learned and review how far offshore safety has evolved in 25 years. In particular it will focus on the industry’s commitment to workforce engagement and consider what each of us can do to play our part in the drive towards continuous improvement in offshore safety. The full agenda for this event will be available on the Step Change website.

Please visit www.stepchangeinsafety.net to book your free place.