

# OFFSHORE SURVEYING EXPERIENCE



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The Standard Club's safety and loss prevention department is made up of a master mariner, a chief engineer and naval architects with considerable experience in various ship types, including offshore units, and their safety management systems. The department undertakes regular condition surveys of ships and offshore units entered in the club, as well as carrying out member risk reviews for all new members in order to assess their safety management systems and ensure that the quality of ships entered in the club remains high.

The surveys are carried out by in-house club surveyors or by a network of external surveyors, all of which have been vetted prior to appointment. All in-house surveyors are accredited Lead Auditors and include the Offshore Vessel Inspection Database Inspector criteria. The use of in-house surveyors allows the club to better understand the risks and to offer advice to members to minimise both injury and damage.

Last year, 56 reviews of member safety management systems were carried out, of which 10 were offshore companies. Since February 2008, the club has surveyed over 1,000 ships with a third of these surveys completed by our in-house surveyors. Over the same period, an additional 131 condition surveys were undertaken on offshore units. Given the complexity of these units, their specialist operations and associated risks, we prefer to use our in-house surveyors where possible.

## RECENT EXAMPLES OF DEFECTS

We have found offshore units generally to be in a good condition and operated to a high standard. However, defects have been found on occasion. Over the last two years these have included:

- modification of the lifeboat embarking system without approval from shore management, manufacturers or statutory authorities
- doors fixed open for ventilation in a hazardous area where an explosive gas/air mixture may occur
- a supply ship using an unapproved ship stability programme
- lack of crew/officer experience for anchor handling and towing operations
- unsafe crew practices when repositioning pontoon hatch covers
- disabled fire detection and fixed fire-fighting systems
- machinery spaces dirty, oily and considered a fire hazard
- stowage of chemicals and paints in the same locker
- restricted access to lifesaving appliances
- modification to unit operations but still relying upon original safety case
- dynamic positioning reference systems having been modified but still relying on the original Failure Mode Effect and Analysis

## MAINTAINING STANDARDS

It is generally accepted in the marine offshore industry that the highly regulated North Sea sector has the highest standards for quality, safety, loss prevention and risk management. These demanding standards offer the marine offshore operator a benchmark for minimum compliance of health and safety procedures within their management system.

However, there is a great level of variation in the standards applied outside North Sea areas. In West Africa, for example, the competence of the local regulatory bodies varies considerably and often they fail to identify defects, non-conformities and/or they do not have the ability to enforce compliance.

Likewise, it is evident that not all Flag States are equipped with sufficiently experienced surveyors to carry out meaningful or effective inspections of offshore ships/units. It is therefore not enough to rely upon classification societies, Flag States or regulators to police standards of maintenance and control.

Some offshore operators have identified that whilst their unit is on location, thus not internationally trading, then IMO regulations do not apply and that they can de-class and no longer need to remain ISM-compliant. Whilst this is technically acceptable, we would expect the member to demonstrate that its in-house management systems are equivalent and robust enough to maintain the unit and evidence that independent verification is in place.

The club is constantly looking for and promoting best practice as opposed to minimum compliance. Members are therefore encouraged to adopt best practice standards across their fleet, irrespective of the particular jurisdiction where offshore operations are carried out.



^ Water discharge from production unit