

COMMITTEE OF COMPANY SIGNATORIES TO THE OFFSHORE DIVING INDUSTRY AGREEMENT (ODIA)

WORKFORCE UPDATE – MARCH 2010

Joint Meetings between RMT and Company Signatories continue

Discussions with the principal RMT representative and Jake Molloy have continued over recent months, covering a variety of topics which this Workforce Update explains in more detail:

- Arrangements for a trial run / costing exercise of the possible 2 new compensation schemes ('Standby and Guaranteed Payments', and 'Extensions to Tours (weather excluded)')
- Research into establishing a 'transfer' scheme covering baseline competence
- Ways to bring other diving contractors into the ODIA network, to support ongoing dialogue with the RMT, and to help the contractors deliver the ODIA Agreement in full
- Raising awareness of the ODIA within the industry, and representing our interests

The possible 2 new Compensation Schemes

Colleagues will recall that the 2009-2012 ODIA settlement included an undertaking of:

"Target date of 31 March 2011 to achieve some form of compensation schemes for

- generally delayed mobilisations, and
- unscheduled extensions to tours (weather excluded)

The establishment of these benefits and their payment are contingent on the Signatories' ability to recoup the amounts from clients"

The signatory companies developed a 'Lobby' Plan aimed at raising awareness and building a 'business case' for putting to clients in support of their funding these new provisions. To this end, we have completed the website www.odia.org.uk, developed a new grade of 'affiliate' contractor member for our ODIA network, and have participated in various industry events and forums. This has included the ODIA Coordinator's contribution (alongside Jake Molloy) to the Step Change Steering Group on Workforce Engagement; invitation to speak at IMCA's Competence Seminar in Aberdeen on 24 March; attendance at Subsea UK's 2010 exhibition; and a nomination (for our joint work programme) at an industry awards event to be held in June.

At the same time, we've been working hard on the wording for the 2 possible schemes, and the systems we'd need to operate them. The discussions were lengthy and detailed, but resulted in the RMT approving the possible scheme for 'Standby'. The one for 'Extensions to Tours' is also agreed, apart from the 'weather exclusion' which the union believes is a 'watering down' of the provision. This is a difference of view which will be difficult to resolve, given the signatories' view from the beginning that any such compensation would exclude 'weather'. However, the union and the signatory companies have decided to press ahead with a simulated 'trial run' of the possible schemes during April and May, to test out whether the systems work, and also to cost both the levels of payments (which would be made) and the management and administration costs of running the schemes. This project has been led by a Working Group comprising operations and logistics people from 3 of the signatory companies. Briefings of personnel involved in the trial are taking place mid-March, with results expected by the end of June 2010, and we will feed back these to RMT representatives in due course.

We know that these schemes were (and are) hugely important for the diving workforce, and we need to do what we said we'd do. Our promise to you was to try our level best to deliver the schemes, and we want to show you how hard we are working on this. The companies want to be in a position by November to decide what, if anything, is possible to introduce and to explain the reasons why, if we can't.

'Deemed competence' – research on a North Sea 'transfer scheme'?

In November, the RMT raised concerns about the way in which the IMCA-based diving competence scheme is being implemented across the 7 companies and that we are not enabling 'deemed competence' fairly. They pointed to IMCA's objective that its industry-wide guidance might facilitate the 'transfer' of competence between companies.

IMCA says:

- *The IMCA competence guidelines were developed to provide offshore contractors with a framework to produce their own competence schemes*
 - *Provided that the contractors' schemes are underpinned by the guidelines, and the assessment criteria used is similar, then proof of competence should be accepted by member companies other than that performing the assessment*
 - *Member companies will obviously reserve the right to review and reassess the evidence, where appropriate*
- Source : IMCA FAQ section on website*

The ODIA signatories established a Working Group to conduct research on this, and other competence-related issues. The conclusions are:

1. There is currently no provision in any of the 7 companies to facilitate the 'transfer' of competence. (Indeed, IMCA knows of no inter-company scheme which does)
2. All 7 companies base their individual scheme upon the IMCA Guidance and Competence Tables, and so there is the potential for establishing an ODIA 'baseline', and an inter-company scheme to support 'transferability'
3. As there is no existing model anywhere in the world to base this on, the signatory companies have to start from scratch, but we believe that there could be huge benefits from investing in this. However, there will also be costs, and it would be a complex piece of work, so
4. The companies want to scope the work to assess scale, the cost / benefit balance, and the resources which would be needed to make it work
5. Accordingly, an expanded Working Group will review and report, by the end of April
 - a. The key principles of a possible 'transfer' arrangement
 - b. Scope the further work required to deliver this
 - c. Assess likely costs and benefits
6. Meantime...
 - a. We await the (hopefully) imminent publication of revised IMCA diving competence tables?!
 - b. Our companies have volunteered to support each other adopt common baseline standards, and this work will go on
 - c. We'll continue to liaise with IMCA (the ODIA has been asked to address the IMCA Competence Seminar on 24 March, on its research into a possible 'North Sea' transfer model) and, of course,
 - d. We will keep you and the RMT updated on plans and progress, and we will listen to feedback you give us.

The ODIA Stakeholder Forum

Colleagues may recall our wish to set up a new forum with a wider remit and broader membership which reflects the range of 'stakeholders' in the UK sector of the North Sea diving industry – contractors, employing companies, RMT company reps, and other vessel / worksite or other workforce representatives. Information on contractor affiliate membership, and on representation of our principal labour supply companies, has been published. Discussions have been taking place between the Coordinator and the main RMT representative on appropriate contractors which work within ODIA jurisdiction, and approaches will be made with a view to a first 'meeting' in June 2010.

Further information, comments, complaints or questions on this Update?

Please contact Val Lockhart on info@odia.org.uk , 01224 526431, or your company RMT rep, or visit the company signatories' website www.odia.org.uk