

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

WORKFORCE UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2011

This Update focuses on issues considered at the last joint meeting of the 'Stakeholder Forum' on 14 June 2011, and how they have been developed over the summer period. The Stakeholder Forum brings together vessel / worksite reps, company reps, ODIA contractors and employing companies, who represent their company or colleagues in discussions on matters relating to the industry or the diving profession, health, safety and welfare, training and competence, relevant legislation or good practice.

Fair allocation of shifts

Reps reported that some individuals in some ODIA contractors were complaining that they always get night shift. Reps felt that, particularly when someone works regularly for a contractor, there should be efforts made to share the shifts fairly. Managers agreed to check how these arrangements are determined within their companies.

On checking, feedback from contractors was consistent ie: that decisions on allocation of day / night shifts were made at vessel level by the OM. There was a general aim to allocate shifts equitably, but sometimes there might be a requirement for special arrangements to meet individual needs. This might mean that not everyone would be content with the outcome so is important that anyone who is unhappy about his/her shift allocation brings this to the attention of the OM, particularly if there is a concern about the health, safety or wellbeing of the worker or colleagues. All managers confirmed that their companies would look into any complaints, fully.

The ODIA would ask workers who feel that any complaints or concerns raised, but which have NOT been handled reasonably, to feed back their experiences through their Reps, to the next meeting.

Mobilisations

Reps asked why the 'previous day rate' is only paid for early check-ins at heliports, and not airports? This issue seemed to be linked with others relating to 'point of mobilisation'. On reviewing the wording of the ODIA Agreement (Clause 6), there seems to be 2 relevant references:

- 6(a)(i) on 'Travel Allowance' – which uses the term 'point of mobilisation and return' in respect of home to work costs, and
- 6(f) on 'Mobilisation' – which refers to payment for previous day for early mobilisation 'at a worksite ... that is moored inshore or alongside' (but neither a heliport nor an airport)

The ODIA agrees that a review of these paragraphs would be beneficial to clarify our shared intentions, as many signatories already pay 'previous day rate' for early mobilisations at a heliport. This will be placed on the agenda for the negotiations commencing in November.

UK Training Matrix - Divers' Additional Training Allowance (DATA)

The ODIA contractors had developed a draft table which sets out, for each of the 5 job roles which receive the DATA, the training they should prioritise. This draft had been published with the June Workforce Update, and significant feedback had been received on this.

The contractors had ensured that the Training Matrix is based on the existing structure of the DATA, and on existing rate levels. Reps reported numerous comments from the workforce on the draft. The principle areas of concern were:

Rigging and Lifting

Reps questioned the relevance and value of this qualification (the relevance of the topsides course for divers; the prescription of the Opito course, rather than allowing an equivalent; the necessity of the certificate for an experienced diver; the link with being assessed as competent in R&L within a company scheme; the unlikely need for divers to undertake topside R&L operations)

There was a wide-ranging and candid discussion on these points. The ODIA contractors explained the main reasons as

- The Opito course is viewed as the industry standard (teaches the essential skills for which there is no vessel equivalent) and clients are increasingly expecting this certificate as standard for divers
- IMCA is recognising this industry priority by developing an international syllabus in line with the Opito standard, because of the safety imperatives around R&L operations
- Contractors need workers to be versatile, and many divers are required to undertake topside R&L operations, particularly on vessels with limited POB
- The certificate is critical for Supervisors, too, to ensure a shared understanding in terminology and concepts when the Deck Foreman passes control to the Supervisor

Reps pointed out that there was currently no provision for exempting personnel from doing this learning, such as those divers who did their initial training prior to 1998 (when diver training included R&L operations). The contractors agreed that these workers should be exempted from this learning, and that other circumstances in which experienced personnel could be exempted should be discussed further within the ODIA and with the RMT. Of course, the certificate itself may still be required, where clients specify this.

The 'Subsea' context

The ODIA contractors believed that the Opito course has to be supplemented to recognise the differences in applying topsides skills, underwater as, since 1998, this learning is not covered anywhere else. Rather than prescribe a lengthy skills-based course, the ODIA wants to develop a 'subsea add-on' to the Opito course - a half or full day in the classroom, with practical experience developed later, on-the-job and under supervision. Further work has to be done to set out course content and source providers, within the ODIA and with the RMT.

Some reps said that experienced personnel should not be expected to do this course as they should know all about the issues covered. The contractors felt that, even for divers who undertook their training before 1998, there have been changes in law and practice relating to lifting operations, and that a well-designed course would be an appropriate way to fill that learning gap.

Supervisors and Superintendents

There was a discussion on whether, having undertaken the 2-day NORSOK Leadership course, Supervisors should be required to undertake further people management skills' training. The contractors and Reps agreed that developing the people management skills of supervisory personnel was important, but also that the wording in the Training Matrix could benefit from more guidance on the options which could be considered.

This general point (on providing guidance on the kinds of training which might be considered) was accepted for other training 'headings' for Supervisors and Superintendents – for IT skills, business / commercial awareness, and for competence assessor courses.

It was also acknowledged that many of the ODIA contractors run in-house courses which cover these topics. If (day rate) personnel could be given access to these (at preferential rates) then completing such a course may also satisfy the general requirement within the Training Matrix. It was agreed that these matters should be discussed further within the ODIA and with the RMT.

What next for the UK Training Matrix?

The ODIA contractors are genuinely grateful for ALL the feedback we received from diving personnel. You pointed out a number of flaws (which we've corrected), prompted us to add or change some content, and made us have a rethink on some general matters.

We think that this leaves 4 issues which still require further discussion, which we'll develop in our Steering Group, with the RMT, and in discussions with individuals and teams.

- Which courses might be deemed 'equivalent' to NORSOK
- Circumstances in which experienced personnel could be exempted from the learning covered by the Opito R1 course
- The content of the half / full day 'Subsea (rigging and lifting) Add-on' course
- Guidance on options for the people management skills, IT skills, business / commercial awareness, competence assessor courses

You can see these 4 issues highlighted in 'Version 4' of the Training Matrix, attached with this Update.

Please let us know (directly by emailing info@odia.org.uk, or through one of the Reps) of any further feedback you think we should consider, so that we can work towards a consensus on the 'final' document.

Business Outlook for UK sector

One of the standing items on the agenda for the Stakeholder Forum is a report by the contractors on business conditions. The Coordinator presented a report on this which highlighted:

- The impact of Macondo on deepwater drilling, but also the wider ramifications as identified by OSPRAG (the UK cross-industry group reviewing issues arising from Macondo for the North Sea) such as the increasing risk environment which will lead to operators becoming choosier about which contractors to work with, and the importance of competence across the entire workforce
- Initial positive forecasts by Oil & Gas UK for the UKCS had been overturned by the unexpected tax increases in the UK budget. But even the positive forecasts were cautious and based on controlling operating costs rises which were running at 5% between 2009-10, and expected to double against declining production. Other barriers identified were the ability of the supply chain to accommodate an increase in activity (people) and inflationary pressures within the UK economy

- The impact of the budget for Oil & Gas UK was to halt or reduce investment, which results in higher operating costs (because of a decline in production); and a flow of assets, investment and people to other regions because of the comparative unattractiveness of the UKCS
- However, the UKCS is still viewed as competitive because of better collaboration between industry bodies; the effects of new operators entering the market; better safety performance of the UKCS; skills and retained knowledge of people; range of management skills, and the falling exchange rate makes sterling-based contracts more cost effective abroad
- The reality of the supply 'food chain' is that contractors have to operate within operators' worlds – if their Opex levels are declining, that impacts on work levels. The consensus seems to be that, for the near to medium term, notwithstanding oil price, inflation and labour costs, operators will focus on cost base. However, this has to be balanced against the drive for 'excellence' in operational and safety performance.

The main issues for the ODIA were identified as

1. Skills, training, competence
2. Reputation for excellence
3. Safety performance
4. Trusting workforce relations / engagement
5. Monitoring / influencing industry bodies (eg: Competency, Behaviours and Human Factors sub-group, responsible for addressing and implementing the competency recommendations developed by OSPRAG's Technical Review Group)
6. Managing costs

Red 7 Marine joins ODIA as Affiliate contractor member

The ODIA has opened up its network to new diving contractors entering the UK offshore market. Where they are using / propose to use DP vessels for diving operations, thus bringing them into ODIA jurisdiction. Such contractors are able to apply for Affiliate Contractor membership of the ODIA, where they meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Holds IMCA contractor membership
2. Active in the UK sector in relevant diving operations
3. Prepared to work towards implementing 'full-ODIA' for their personnel
4. Interested in promoting good industrial relations within the diving workforce in the North Sea
5. Prepared to contribute in some way to the Stakeholder Group, and
6. Contributes to the costs of implementing shared objectives via a subscription

The ODIA is delighted that Red 7 Marine joined our organisation, in July 2011.

New company and vessel reps – and more wanted!

The ODIA welcomes the new Technip Company rep, Ged Edgar, who works on the Skandi Achiever. Ged was able to arrange an ODIA discussion earlier this month with many of the crew, which we hope has generated interest among workers on other vessels to take on vessel reps' roles.

ISS is also actively seeking a company rep, as well as encouraging a vessel rep for the Polaris and for other worksites. ISS and the ODIA contractors requested a plea for reps in this Workforce

Update, drawing attention to the rights of reps to paid time off, protection from detriment and the contractors' view that reps are a critical part of making two-way workforce communications work.

Please think about becoming a rep, if your worksite or vessel is not already covered, and contact any of the existing reps at <http://www.odia.org.uk/index/stakeholders> or Val Lockhart at info@odia.org.uk

IMCA revised diving division guidance and competence tables

The ODIA has submitted a detailed response to IMCA's draft revised competence tables which form the basis of the competence schemes of every ODIA contractor. These will be important for further progress with our competence work programme.

'Transfer' or 'Recognition' of Competence

The ODIA has agreed arrangements which support consistency in managing requests for 'recognition' or 'transfer' of assessed competence between ODIA contractors, while ensuring that it is for the individual contractor to satisfy itself that an individual worker to be engaged on its behalf is competent for a particular role or task.

These arrangements differ, depending on the working patterns of the individual:

- (1) workers with working patterns which, while casual or ad-hoc, allow the worker to enrol in and progress through a single or 'main' company competence scheme, or
- (2) workers with very transient or peripatetic working patterns which impede the worker's achieving competence through one single or 'main' company scheme.

Draft procedures for (1) above have been finalised, and these will be reviewed by the ODIA's Steering Group on 27 Sept, before consultation with workforce reps for feedback. Workers in group (2) are covered by the ODIA Very Transient scheme (see below).

The ODIA Very Transient Competence Scheme

The ODIA has agreed the basis of a shared competence assessment mechanism amongst its member companies. This will allow a very-transient (VT) worker to be assessed on trips, regardless of who they are working for, and to build a portfolio of assessed units. The ODIA will have a shared service which will verify the portfolio and, if approved, will issue an ODIA certificate of competence. This will be valid for 3 years, and revalidation will be conditional upon maintenance of a work log and the successful completion of a knowledge questionnaire to demonstrate up-to-date understanding of relevant issues. This scheme will benefit both VT workers (who have no way to receive a competence certificate at present) and contractors who will be ensuring that our entire workforce is competent.

The Coordinator is working her way through the project, with the ODIA Steering Group monitoring progress, and regular consultation taking place with the RMT.

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, Derek Moore DIVEATDEREK@aol.com ; the RMT office 01224 210118, or visit the company signatories' website www.odia.org.uk