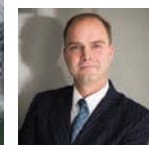


WORKSHIPS

SAFELY UP TO *SPEED*



Philip Woodcock
Operations Director & QHSE
Manager, Workships

On the surface, the Offshore Wind industry has a good safety track record. “So far on wind farm crew vessels industry-wide, there have been zero fatalities,” says Workships’ Philip Woodcock. “Statistically this will not continue. We have to improve, learn lessons and share information. Together we can move the eventuality further and further back and mitigate the consequences of major incidents.

Workships have over 25 years’ experience in the management of platforms, vessels, crew and offshore logistics, amongst other things. They currently operate a fleet of 13 vessels, recently expanded by the addition of two Damen vessels, a Fast Crew Supplier (FCS) 2610 and an FCS 2008. Mr Woodcock is the company’s Operations Director and QHSE Manager. Safety, therefore, is a matter close to his heart. Here, he gives the benefit of his experience to suggest how the industry can get safely up to speed.

In what ways does Offshore Wind QHSE differ from oil and gas?

“To begin with, a lot of contracts were awarded very much on the basis of tendered prices. It was logical it should be this way; renewables do not experience the same peaks in production and associated boom times as oil and gas. However, this means less money to finance QHSE initiatives.

“Then there’s the fact that it’s a new industry and the energy providers are utilities companies, not offshore specialists and, initially, were not familiar with the implications of working offshore. Thankfully, this is changing now.”

Oil and gas has taken several decades to reach the high QHSE standards we see today – will we have to wait until the next generation before the offshore renewables sector catches up?

“The fact is that renewables offshore construction is still offshore construction. It requires the same techniques and the same assets and poses similar safety implications as oil and gas. The similarities between renewables and non-renewables mean that contractors already have the right equipment and techniques. What we need are industrial channels to facilitate safe practice. Within this are two necessary key features: Observation and transparent reporting.”

What should we observe to improve safety?

“Everything. The more knowledge we gather the better the chance of avoiding a tragedy. I often think of the way Henry Ford used to record workers to identify repeated, common, physical actions then position equipment accordingly for more efficient production. We can do the same for safety. We observe movement, for example, from a seat to a ladder and this tells us where the handrails should go. “And we need to constantly monitor – at Workships we have enlisted BMO Offshore to carry out monthly vessel performance monitoring on things such

as body vibration, motion sickness and turbine impact.

“But we need to make sure we respond to the things we observe and this means constantly tweaking the design of a vessel. Vessel design should not stop at ‘best in class’; it needs to keep going, in a process of evolution, if safety is to improve.

“The same is true for personnel. We put crew through a process of ongoing training and examination, with a strong QHSE focus. Anyone who fails to pass an examination relating to core competencies is simply not permitted to sail.”

Does the industry pay enough attention to crew satisfaction?

“Crew are not important – they’re vital! This goes for everything from safety to client relations.

“As projects get farther out and crew are expected to spend more time at sea, we really need to ensure the crew are comfortable and alert, so they can concentrate on doing their job safely. This is often straightforward, covering things such as the addition of vibration mounted suspension seats to a vessel that meet High Speed Craft Code standards. It’s getting expensive though – the need to stay at sea longer and the larger vessels and increased demands for comfort mean

that a vessel today costs as much as a whole fleet did just a few years ago!”

How can the industry increase transparency?

“The first step is to encourage people to report incidents. Historically there was a tradition of ‘what happens on the boat stays on the boat.’ This is unhelpful. People need to feel that they can report without fear of recrimination – it’s non-reporting that should attract punishment.

“Secondly, information needs to be shared. That means creating channels where people can release data about their experiences anonymously, without fear that their reputation will be compromised. We are part of the IMCA renewables working group and send all internal safety notices to the association. If there is something they feel is of interest to other members, the information is shared – anonymously. We are also participating in an industrial safety forum with the National Workboat Association. Two developments have arisen from this: The sharing of information via IMCA safety flashes and the compilation of statistical data from members.

“Mistakes are made, everyone makes mistakes. You can hide them, but I’d rather learn from them to prevent repetition.”