

**From CEO John Clegg**

As we pass the twentieth anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, where 167 offshore workers lost their lives in a major oil and gas facility fire in the North Sea on July 6, 1988, it is time to reflect and remember. We owe it to the memory of all of those who lost their lives, or suffered as a result, to do our best to reduce the possibility of such an incident ever happening again.

I am concerned that lessons from Piper are being forgotten and new engineers are unaware of the tragedy. Everyone in the industry must continually strive to ensure that they fully contribute to the effective control and management of major hazards offshore and to a safe working environment.

On another matter, we are reminding operators that asbestos management is regulated by NOPSA through assessment of the facility safety case and inspections. If the operator of the facility is not complying with its commitments in the safety case and the regulations regarding asbestos, NOPSA may take enforcement action.

## Industry matters

**NOPSA supports call for Piper Alpha memorial scholarships**

NOPSA is supporting a call which has been made by one of the survivors of the Piper Alpha disaster, Ed Punchard, who now lives in Perth, for industry to support scholarships in memory of those who lost their lives in the disaster.

The proposal is for a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary scholarship scheme where graduate students could apply for one of 167 individual scholarships each in the name of one of those who lost their lives on Piper Alpha. This would allow students to further their study or research in an area that contributes to the cause of offshore safety. The proposal was launched in the UK, but NOPSA is hoping that industry in Australia will support it. Those interested in supporting the scholarships are encouraged to contact Miranda Taylor at APPEA.

**Asbestos management**

Where facilities are known to have 'in-situ' asbestos, NOPSA has committed to carry out an inspection within 2-6 weeks of that facility arriving in Australian waters with the management of asbestos as a targeted topic.

NOPSA regulates the management of asbestos on offshore facilities by assessing the facility safety case and then inspecting to verify that the operator is complying with the commitments in it. The safety case must contain a detailed description of the arrangements in the Asbestos Management Plan.

The use of all asbestos material is prohibited except for certain permitted circumstances. One of these is the use of asbestos in products that are 'in situ' or fixed or installed in a way that does not constitute a risk to users until the asbestos contained in the product is disturbed. NOPSA has published a guideline on [asbestos management](#)<sup>1</sup> that explains the regulations.

If the operator of the facility is not complying with its commitments in the safety case and the regulations, NOPSA may take enforcement action.

### **Crane driver unit of competence**

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the unit of competence for offshore lifting has been endorsed by the National Training Quality Council. This is a significant step forward in achieving a consistent approach to competency in a high risk area of operations.

NOPSA will use this [unit of competence](#)<sup>2</sup> as a benchmark when undertaking assessment and inspection. This approach has been explained in NOPSA's [assessment policy](#)<sup>3</sup> which is available on the website.

### **Cyclone Reporting**

In previous cyclone seasons, operators of manned facilities have provided information to NOPSA on their responses to cyclone threats. This information was provided voluntarily and was used to respond to other agency requests for information. NOPSA has decided to discontinue the cyclone reporting scheme as it is not properly within its remit to maintain oversight of operators' responses to tropical cyclone threats.

### **Register now for HSR forum**

Online registrations for the [2008 HSR Forum](#)<sup>4</sup> to be held on 5 August at the Burswood Convention Centre are now being taken. The forum aims to present topical issues and advice for HSRs on how to be more effective in their role.

### **APPEA Safety Conference soon**

The [APPEA 2008 Safety Conference](#)<sup>5</sup> to be held on 6, 7 August at the Burswood Convention Centre is fast approaching. The safety conference aims to bring together all players from the Australian oil and gas industry to share the latest research and practice in health and safety. Some of the major changes in health and safety management over the last decade, particularly the role of organisational culture and leadership will be featured in the presentations.

If you have any queries regarding registration, please contact Miranda Taylor, senior safety advisor, APPEA on [mtaylor@appea.com.au](mailto:mtaylor@appea.com.au)

## **NOPSA Safety Alerts**

NOPSA periodically issues [Safety Alerts](#)<sup>6</sup> that are published on the NOPSA website. NOPSA encourages operators to share the lessons learned identified in the alerts with their workforce.

## **Submissions of Assessments to NOPSA**

NOPSA has updated its [guideline on submissions assessments](#)<sup>7</sup>. All assessments are to be addressed to the Project Coordinator. A quality and administrative check is conducted prior to passing the submission to the lead assessor. This covers assessment documents as follows:

- Safety Cases
- Pipeline Safety Management Plans, and
- Diving Submissions

Email submissions are to be sent to [submissions@nopsa.gov.au](mailto:submissions@nopsa.gov.au).

## **Play your part in Safe Work Week**

Safe Work Australia Week is a national week to focus attention on workplace safety issues around Australia. It aims to encourage all working Australians to get involved in, and concentrate on, safety in their workplace to reduce death, injury and disease. This year, Safe Work Australia Week will be held from 19 to 25 October.

You can visit the [Australian Safety and Compensation Council \(ASCC\) website](#)<sup>8</sup> to get ideas for safety activities, download the employer kit to assist you in organising your workplace events and order free promotional products to give to your staff.

## **International**

### **Three people killed in confined space incident**

NOPSA notes that three experienced seafarers were killed as a result of entering an anchor chain locker on board a North Sea emergency response and rescue vessel. The [UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch](#)<sup>9</sup> has issued a flyer to the shipping industry regarding entering dangerous enclosed/confined spaces.

## Process Safety

Not all hazards are the same or can cause equal consequences. Personal or occupational safety hazards, such as slips, falls, cuts, and vehicle accidents usually affect one individual worker. On the other hand, process safety hazards may cause major accidents involving the release of potentially dangerous materials, fires and explosions or both. Process safety incidents can have catastrophic effects and can result in multiple injuries and fatalities, as well as substantial economic, property, and environmental damage.

The [Centre for Chemical Process Safety](#)<sup>10</sup> of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers issues a one-page process safety flyer known as 'Beacon' which normally highlights alerts and lessons learned. The July issue focuses on defining process safety – as opposed to personal safety. NOPSA encourages operators of production facilities to share this edition with their workforce. Copies can be requested from: [info@nopsa.gov.au](mailto:info@nopsa.gov.au)

## Lessons from fire at the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot, UK

A number of useful safety lessons can be drawn from the [Buncefield Investigation Board](#)<sup>11</sup>, 8th report published on 15th July.

The first concerns the management of maintenance activities: *“Operators of major hazard sites should, as a priority, review and amend as necessary their management systems for maintenance of equipment and systems to ensure their continuing integrity in operation. Where there are a number of operators at a facility... the review should be integrated between site operators to the appropriate extent.”*

The Investigation Board reminds operators of their obligations under ALARP, and what are considered reasonable changes in the light of new knowledge: *“We also expect the risk threshold to change as a result of what we learn from Buncefield.”* The report goes on to say, *“it is not uncommon for operators with duties under safety and environmental legislation to see the risk threshold under the ALARP principle as a ceiling, the point at which they may safely stop seeking further improvements. In fact the ALARP threshold is the floor on which dutyholders need to stand, the starting point for best practice...”*

Finally, the report reminds operators that, *“the rates of conventional safety accidents and injuries in the past few years could not, in itself, be taken as positive assurance of an overall improvement in process safety across the major hazard industries.”*

## Stakeholder relations

### HSRs and notices

Health and safety representatives (HSRs) can issue Provisional Improvement Notices (PINs) if they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a person is contravening a provision of the law in circumstances that make it likely to be repeated. NOPSA has been informed that two PINs were issued on an offshore facility this month.

## Website

### New three-year corporate plan in place

A [corporate plan](#)<sup>12</sup> outlining the strategic directions that NOPSA will take to regulate the health and safety of the Australian national offshore petroleum industry for 2008-11 is now available on our website.

### Annual operating plan available

The NOPSA annual [operating plan](#)<sup>13</sup> which outlines activity targets for the Authority for 2008-09 in support of the Authority's three year corporate plan is now available on our website.

### Q & As Varanus Island

NOPSA's role in providing regulatory support to the WA Department of Industry and Resources is outlined in a series of [Q & As](#)<sup>14</sup> on our website.

## Regulatory activities

### As at 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008

*Disclaimer: Activity and incident quantities identified here may vary as further information becomes available. Statistics are prepared just prior to the last Friday of the month*

### Safety Case Assessment

July 2008	Submitted	Accepted	Rejected	Withdrawn	Under Assessment
<b>Assessment Type</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>			<b>20</b>
Safety Case NEW	3				3
Safety Case REVISED	12	5			12
Safety Case					
Pipeline SMP NEW		2			
Pipeline SMP REVISED	1				
Diving SMS	1				1
Diving Project Plan					
Scope of Validation	4	1			3
Field Development Plan	1	2			1

## **Inspections**

Seven inspections were conducted; the following issues arose:

- Lack of an effective health and safety policy involving consultation with the workforce
- Not following up on NOPSA Safety Alert 20 – 110 V portable hand tools
- Noise
- Workforce involvement
- JSA documentation
- Isolation – PTW issues
- Lifting operations near process areas
- Key personnel competency
- Frequency of flights to unmanned platforms
- Inspection/monitoring facility structures
- Failure of Emergency Shutdown Valves to operate as required
- Poor practices in hazardous area equipment maintenance practices

## **Incidents and complaints**

There were 24 incidents in total (21 Dangerous Occurrences and three Lost Time Injuries).

### Major incidents included:

- Failed tugger line that could have caused death or serious injury
- One dropped object that could have caused death or serious injury
- One fire / explosion
- One marine collision

### Significant incidents included:

- Three injuries - crushed finger, back injury and trip/slip causing head injury
- One incident of damage to safety-critical equipment
- Seven incidents involving alarms, i.e. ERP's implemented
- Six incidents that could have caused incapacitation

Three complaints were received regarding:

- bad work practices
- personnel competency levels on night shifts
- accommodation - >2 people per room

### **Enforcement**

One improvement notice was issued for the following:

- No appropriate auditing of Safety Management System in previous five years

## **Subscribe**

[Past issues of this newsletter](#)<sup>15</sup> are available from the NOPSA website. Operators and other employers are encouraged to circulate this newsletter to their workforce. Please add your details to our [distribution list](#)<sup>16</sup> to receive future copies of this newsletter.

## **Find out more**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/document/N-09000-GL0254%20-%20Asbestos%20Management.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/document/PMASUP305A%20Operate%20Offshore%20Cranes.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/document/Crane%20Driver%20Certification%20Note.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.appeasafetyconference.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.appeasafetyconference.com.au/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.appeasafetyconference.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.appeasafetyconference.com.au/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/alert/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/document/N-04000-GL0225%20-%20Making%20Assessment%20Submissions%20to%20NOPSA.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ascc.gov.au/ascc/SafeWorkAusWeek/SafeWorkAusWeek2008/>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.maib.gov.uk/cms\\_resources/Viking%20Islay%20Flyer.pdf](http://www.maib.gov.uk/cms_resources/Viking%20Islay%20Flyer.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.aiche.org/CCPS/Publications/Beacon/index.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.buncefildinvestigation.gov.uk/index.htm>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.nopsa.gov.au/document/NOPSA\\_Corporate\\_Plan\\_2008\\_11.pdf](http://www.nopsa.gov.au/document/NOPSA_Corporate_Plan_2008_11.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/Corporate/Plan%20-%20Annual%20Operating%202008-2009.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.nopsa.gov.au/media/Q%20and%20A%20-%20Varanus%20Island%20-%20NOPSA%20role%20in%20providing%20regulatory%20support.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.nopsa.gov.au/CEO\\_emails/index.asp](http://www.nopsa.gov.au/CEO_emails/index.asp)

<sup>16</sup> [info@nopsa.gov.au](mailto:info@nopsa.gov.au)