

CENTER FOR MARINE RESOURCES / Texas A&M University
Sea Grant Program

SUMMARY: MARINE SAFETY SEMINAR---JANUARY 27-28, 1977

Marine firms are increasingly concerned with how to cope with the problems of developing effective safety programs, a bewildering array of governmental agencies and regulations, and ever-increasing insurance rates. As offshore activity increases, the problems become more intense.

In order to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the airing of problems associated with marine safety, the Marine Services Association of Texas and the Texas A&M University Sea Grant Program sponsored a Marine Safety Seminar in Corpus Christi on January 27-28, 1977.

Representatives from the following marine industry segments reviewed their current safety programs, evaluated their safety training needs and discussed key problem areas in conducting a safety program: offshore service boat, steamship, diving, shipbuilding and offshore drilling. The panel also discussed availability of safety information, equipment and special training needs, safety regulations and government policy, national safety programs and their relation to specific programs, and evaluation of cost in establishing and conducting a safety program.

Participating representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard office of merchant marine safety, Occupational Safety and Health Administration maritime compliance programming office and the U.S. Geological Survey marine oil and gas operations branch discussed the establishment and enforcement of safety regulations and requirements for the marine/offshore industry.

Agency representatives were called on to explain how standards are established, what industry input is necessary and how industry can register objections to established safety standards. The coordination of safety regulations between enforcement authorities and a cost/benefit consideration given to new standards were also considered.

INDUSTRY PANEL

Panelists

Capt. C.H. Waring, Lykes Brothers Steamship Co., Inc.
Robert Potter, Innerspace, Inc.
Paul O'Connor, Field Drilling Co.
Carrol Dugas, Offshore Logistics, Inc.
Jerry Reid, Livingston Shipbuilding Co.
Moderator: Ned Middleton, Jackson Marine

The presentations centered on methods of training and indoctrinating employees with regard to safety and comparative costs of operating and maintaining safety programs.

A major personnel problem is the high turnover rate characteristic of the marine industry in general. This factor increases training costs and makes it difficult to build and maintain a cadre of competent personnel. Convincing employees to take proper safety precautions also can pose problems. Most firms combine a formal safety training program (classes, literature, etc.) with a variety of incentives, such as dinners and contests.

Costs associated with safety are rising at rapid rates. Increasing compensation rates cause premiums to rise. Major factors in increasing costs are the record-keeping and safety measures imposed on industry by government regulation.

Questions and Answers

What is being done to prevent slips and falls on decks and barges?

The primary industry answer has been the development of specially constructed shoes and special high-friction marine coatings. The U.S. Navy is currently doing research on the problem.

How can the number of government regulations be kept at a minimum?

One answer is for industry to develop its own program at a rapid pace rather than wait for government intercession.

AGENCY PANEL

Panelists

Rear Admiral W.M. Benkert, U.S. Coast Guard

James M. Meagher, OSHA

Richard B. Krahl, U.S.G.S.

Moderator: Rex Alford, Continental Oil Co.

Panelist discussion centered primarily on the identification of agency roles in regulating safety, agency procedures in developing regulations, and methods of coordinating regulatory programs and eliminating overlap.

With regard to the roles played by the various regulatory agencies, U.S.G.S. has fairly well-defined responsibilities: the regulation of fixed structures operating in the waters of the Continental Shelf. Areas of potential overlap between U.S.G.S. and the Coast Guard have been largely resolved. In contrast, both OSHA and the Coast Guard have very broad responsibilities with regard to safety, and there appears to be considerable jurisdictional overlap between the two.

Much of the confusion that exists in the regulation of safety is due to the fact that many pieces of safety legislation are relatively new. In time, existing overlaps between agencies will, hopefully, be worked out. A major problem is that development of regulations is extremely time-consuming due to the number of legal steps required.

Questions and Answers

Does OSHA have jurisdiction over fixed structures?

OSHA solicitors have interpreted the answer to be yes, with regard to the working conditions of employees, and in the absence of other federal agency standards. Admiral Benkert noted that the Coast Guard is in the process of developing regulatory standards in this area as part of a package dealing with mobile units.

How will the 200-mile limit affect offshore operations?

At the present time, the 200-mile limit is solely a fishing concept. Consequently, industry operations will not be affected.

What are regulating agencies doing to ensure that inspectors are adequately trained with regard to the operations of industries they inspect?

OSHA meets this problem by hiring people familiar with offshore operations and by providing inspectors with a clear set of guidelines delineating safe and unsafe conditions. The Coast Guard has a series of in-house schools for personnel training and also utilizes industry internship programs.

Will OSHA and the Coast Guard develop a memorandum of understanding on uninspected vessels?

The Coast Guard has no statutory authority regarding uninspected vessels; consequently, any regulatory activity would probably fall under the OSHA domain.

A REMINDER--The Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service is sponsoring a seminar on marine insurance coverage, claims and survey on March 18 at the Marriott Motor Hotel in Houston.

For further information, contact the advisory services representative in your area:

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