



Investigation into fatalities on Stena Clyde drilling rig, Bass Strait, 27 August 2012

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) is continuing its independent investigation into a major accident involving two fatalities on the Stena Clyde mobile offshore drilling unit (MODU) facility in the Bass Strait on Monday 27 August 2012.

Pending the conclusion of its investigation, NOPSEMA would like to draw the attention of those working in the Australian offshore oil and gas industry to the following considerations in support of providing a safe place of work.

Preliminary considerations

1. An appropriate risk assessment system should be implemented for all stages of work. Workers involved should have an opportunity to contribute to this assessment, including consideration of factors such as: stored energy; equipment design limits; and, impact of external conditions.
2. Communication is a key part of any work offshore. Supervisors should verify that all workers involved in any task understand their role and any associated risks.
3. All equipment utilised in planned work should be fit for purpose and in good working order. If the equipment is not working correctly, a reassessment of the risks associated with the work or task should be conducted.

Chronology of events

24 August 2012 – drilling operations were underway on the Stena Clyde MODU when the drill pipe string became 'stuck in the hole'.

27 August 2012 – instructions were given to rig up for a wire line operation to sever the stuck pipe in the well. The drill crew was preparing for the downhole cutting and removal of the stuck pipe when the accident occurred. While attempting to unscrew the top drive from the drill pipe string, to facilitate the wire line operation, two workers were struck by a manual tong that rotated at speed. Shortly afterwards, the two workers died. After the operator, Stena Drilling (Australia) Pty Ltd, notified NOPSEMA of the accident, the authority initiated an investigation and commenced mobilisation of its investigation team.

Contributing factors

NOPSEMA will further examine the following contributing factors, as part of its investigation into the fatalities on the Stena Clyde:

Command and control: Operator and Titleholder decision-making and organisational authority in the context of well bore, met-ocean and surface rig equipment factors, work planning and communication of plans to the workforce.

Equipment rigging arrangement: The rigging arrangement of the break out tong at the time of the accident was a change from the usual arrangement, apparently arising from the circumstances of the stuck pipe, inclement weather and the consequential heaving motion of the rig.

Management of change: The investigation will address whether the changes to proposed operations were properly considered and communicated to the workers involved.

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Contributing factors (continued)

Risk assessment: As noted above in relation to the equipment rigging arrangement, change associated with the chosen arrangement including snatch blocks and the tugger winch under the prevailing met-ocean conditions may have warranted additional risk assessment. The investigation will address the implementation of risk assessment processes as part of its investigation.

Equipment failure: The rig was fitted with a top drive and integral pipe torque connector. The torque connector could not provide the necessary torque to disconnect the pipe, which led to the decision to use the manual break out tong. The investigation will focus on understanding these circumstances, integrity of the equipment and any other course of action that might have been taken.

Background information

At the time of the fatalities, the Stena Clyde MODU was located in Commonwealth waters of the Bass Strait, approximately 100 kilometres south of Port Campbell in Victoria. The Stena Clyde was contracted by Origin Energy Resources Ltd (the Titleholder) to undertake drilling activities for the Geopraphe Development campaign (as part of the overall Otway Basin drilling campaign) in exploration permit VIC/L23. Stena Drilling (Australia) Pty Ltd was the Operator and drilling contractor for the Stena Clyde.

NOPSEMA is Australia's national regulator for safety, well integrity and environmental management of offshore petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters. The authority performs its functions under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* and Regulations.

