

Contents

From the CEO	1
Overhydration	2
Preventing the next 'black swan'	3
Environment culture	4
Safety inspection priorities	5
Change management	5
Environmental performance standards	6
Environmental assessments	7
Information and inspections	7
Safety Alert #57 Fast Rescue Craft unplanned descent	8
Towards a model of safety culture	8
Activity and performance	9
Schedule of events	12
<u>Glossary of acronyms</u>	

“Safety is not an intellectual exercise to keep us in work. It is a matter of life and death.”

Sir Brian Appleton,
Technical Advisor to the Cullen Inquiry,
after Piper Alpha

From the CEO

One year ago, my message in this newsletter expressed condolences following the deaths of two offshore workers on the *Stena Clyde* in the Bass Strait and announced the commencement of NOPSEMA’s independent investigation into the accident. As the loved ones and friends of the two men who died bear the burden of their loss, the investigation team remains focused on gathering and analysing evidence to determine what went wrong.



The investigators have been reviewing evidence in a methodical and systematic way to understand the way work was planned and performed leading up to the accident. The team has examined and tested specific equipment involved in the accident, and identified and engaged expert witnesses. As the investigation progresses, NOPSEMA continues to liaise closely with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. There is still important work to be done and NOPSEMA remains committed to understanding exactly how this accident occurred, sharing further information for the safety of all offshore workers and, if required, to hold to account any parties that may have failed in their responsibility to do all that they can to provide a safe place for people to work.

Industry executives and workers at all levels should take time to review the preliminary considerations NOPSEMA published following the accident and challenge themselves, “Are we doing enough to be safe?”

NOPSEMA inspectors are identifying common shortcomings across the industry. What appears to be common sense for many health and safety professionals does not necessarily translate to good practice offshore. The authority considers information from the offshore operations it regulates when defining its priorities for the year ahead: performance standards, elements of process safety and technical controls. OHS inspectors will be, for example, examining operators’ maintenance management and management of change systems. Environmental specialists will be, for example, examining oil spill contingency plans and preparedness, and the application of appropriate performance standards against controls. We will be discussing priorities in greater detail in our liaison with operators, as well as in this and future issues of *the Regulator*.

NOPSEMA is committed to fulfilling its responsibility to ask industry “Have you done enough to reduce risk?” and then inspecting to check that industry is delivering on its commitments. As a result, I anticipate further robust debate in operator liaison meetings, on offshore facilities, in boardrooms and living rooms. This is essential to identifying how best to protect offshore workforce health and safety and reduce environmental impacts. Delivering on these objectives is no easy task and cannot be met by simple checklists or a one-size-fits-all approach. Continuous improvement must remain a priority for industry.



Jane Cutler, CEO



Overhydration and hyponatremia



The risks and symptoms of heat stress and dehydration are well recognised in the offshore petroleum industry. Many facility operators, however, may not be aware of hyponatremia – a potentially fatal condition caused when levels of sodium in the body become dangerously low.

Symptoms of hyponatremia can appear similar to those of heatstroke and include headaches and behavioural changes such as confusion, fatigue, restlessness and irritability. If left untreated, seizures, brain damage, coma and even death can occur.

In a recent dangerous occurrence reported to NOPSEMA, an offshore worker was medically evacuated to an intensive care unit after suffering a seizure caused by hyponatremia.

The primary cause of hyponatremia is overhydration. This occurs when the body takes in more water than it excretes, diluting the body's normal levels of sodium. Under normal conditions, a healthy adult would need to consume more than nine litres of water a day to become overhydrated. Offshore workers, however, who are not properly acclimatised to their environment are at increased risk, as sodium levels can drop further through perspiration during moderate physical work.

Operators have a duty of care under Clause 9(2)(g) of Schedule 3 to the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* (OPGSS Act) to take all reasonably practicable steps to monitor the health and safety of all members of the workforce and keep records of that monitoring.

To mitigate the risks of hyponatremia, operators should ensure that new workers are given sufficient time to adjust to conditions offshore, particularly those who usually live in a different climate. If the consumption of electrolyte drinks is promoted on the facility, then operators should seek appropriate advice on the correct concentration levels based on the environment and workload. Consideration should also be given to the total dissolved salts in the drinking water on the facility, as levels will vary depending on the source.

For more information and further guidance in managing work in hot environments, operators may refer to the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH) document 'Heat Stress Standard & Documentation Developed for Use in the Australian Environment.' Contact the AIOH at aioh.org.au to obtain a copy.



Preventing the next ‘black swan’

As Australia’s representative on the [International Regulators’ Forum](#), NOPSEMA will host the 5th International Regulators’ Offshore Safety Conference in Perth on 21-23 October 2013. This bi-annual conference is an opportunity for regulators and those engaged in the global upstream oil and gas sector to reflect on major accident events and lessons learned, share best practice and identify areas for the improvement of health and safety outcomes.

The theme of this year’s conference is ‘preventing the next black swan’, which aims to encourage participants to consider how the offshore petroleum industry can better prepare for the next ‘black swan’ event – a large-scale event that is unforeseen and potentially catastrophic. Over two days, eminent regulatory, safety and technical specialists from the United States, Canada, Brazil and Europe, will present a range of insights and challenges on the lessons arising from major accident events such as the BP Macondo and PTTEP AA Montara blowouts.

The program will cover industry progress, regulatory responses, response planning, process and asset integrity risk, and how to build capacity and capability within organisations and the workforce.

In addition to the conference, NOPSEMA will facilitate two technical workshops that are open for separate registration. On 21 October, an interactive technical workshop on safety culture will provide participants with a solid understanding of the attributes of a positive safety culture and effective strategies to improve safety culture. The workshop will be facilitated by leading applied psychologist, Dr Mark Fleming, who is the *CN Professor of Safety Culture* at Saint Mary’s University in Nova Scotia. Dr Fleming has twenty years’ experience in industrial health and safety management in high hazard industries, including offshore oil and gas. On 24 October, there will be a technical seminar covering research and industry progress towards improved understanding of underwater acoustic impacts, with the opportunity to explore implications for the management and regulation of the marine environment.

For more information about the conference, to view the program, or to register as a delegate to the conference and/or workshops visit irfconference2013.com.au



Environment culture – planning to respond

The challenge is set for offshore petroleum operators to mirror the leadership demonstrated in the development of an offshore safety culture, in the creation of an environment culture that properly recognises the importance of both preventing and preparing to respond to very low likelihood but credible, high consequence events.

In 1988, the *Piper Alpha* disaster in the North Sea claimed 167 lives and marked a step change towards the establishment of an offshore petroleum health and safety culture. It took an unacceptable loss of life before safety came under the spotlight in the offshore petroleum industry, through the development of the safety case approach.

Major loss of hydrocarbon containment events such as the PTTEP AA Montara blowout in 2009 and BP Macondo in 2010, have brought environmental management into focus. Recommendations arising from the Montara Commission of Inquiry led to the formation of NOPSEMA in January 2012 as the single national regulator of safety, well integrity and environmental management by the Australian offshore petroleum industry. The changes reflect the view held by both government and the community that severe environmental impacts resulting from offshore petroleum activities are unacceptable and that failure to prepare to respond adequately, even for very low likelihood events, will not be tolerated.

A focus on prevention of oil spills is clearly in everyone's interests for protection of both people and the environment. It is essential, however, that companies also develop a culture that properly recognises and understands the environmental consequences that may arise if our best efforts to prevent unlikely events are unsuccessful, by placing equal focus on preparedness to respond. Such a culture is needed to ensure that adequate attention is subsequently directed to planning and preparing to respond to these events in order to do as much as possible to avoid and minimise consequences that would otherwise result in widespread environmental damage.

The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009 outline the legal responsibilities for environmental management by the offshore petroleum industry. Industry will more efficiently and effectively meet these obligations and demonstrate their operations can be carried out in a responsible manner if a culture within industry continues to mature so that employees properly reconcile requirements for environmental planning, monitoring and reporting, particularly in relation to oil spill response.

Under the OPGGS Act, petroleum activities can commence only where there are accepted oil spill response plans that are tailored to a specific activity, designed to avoid or reduce the impacts of spilt oil and ready to be implemented. You may be aware of recent debate around the use of oil dispersants in marine and offshore incidents in Australian waters, following reports about the potential effects of particular dispersants in the response to the BP Macondo blowout in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

In 2013-14, oil spill contingency planning will be a focus for NOPSEMA through additional assessment, inspection and regulatory advice to ensure that industry is aware of the need for each petroleum activity to have spill response arrangements in place that are ready to go and are commensurate with the potential consequences of a 'worst case' credible spill scenario. This includes the need for activity operators to demonstrate, in the environment plan, that the implementation of any response plan would reduce impacts of spilt oil and would not have unacceptable impacts on the environment.

For more information see the NOPSEMA Guidance Note on 'Oil spill contingency planning' on the 'Spill Contingency Planning' page under the 'Environmental Management' tab at nopsema.gov.au

Safety and integrity inspection priorities

In 2013-14, NOPSEMA's Safety and Integrity inspection teams will examine:

Performance standards

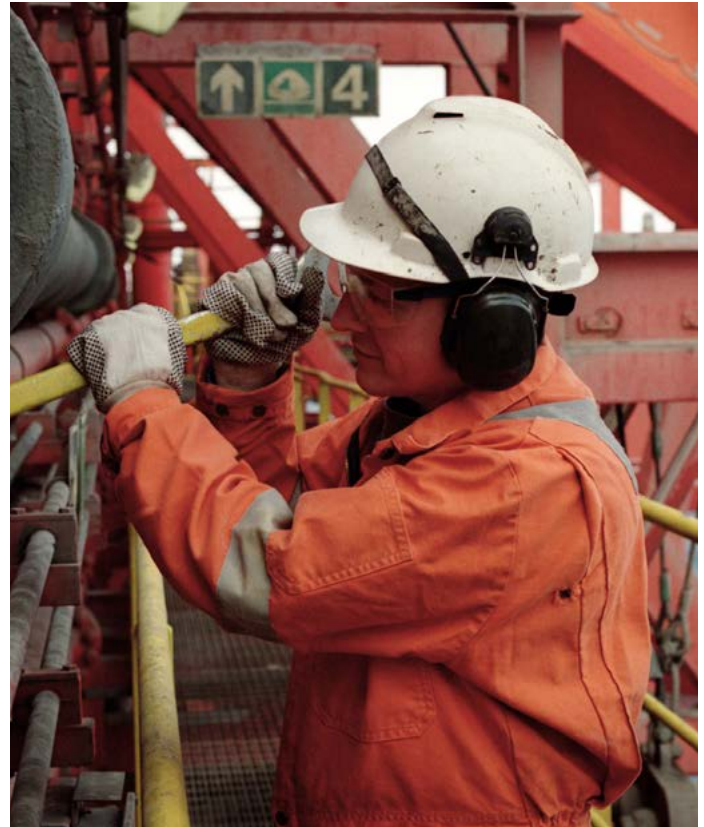
The effectiveness of an operator's management of the performance of their facilities' safety critical equipment (SCE) in relation to the performance standards described in their safety cases. The operator's safety management system for a facility must specify the performance standards that apply. Performance standards are parameters against which control measures for major accident events are assessed to ensure they reduce the risks to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) on an on-going basis.

Operator (self) audit

The effectiveness of operators' systems for the monitoring, audit and review of the implementation of their safety management systems, identifying deficiencies and driving continuous improvement.

Hazardous area equipment

The effectiveness of operators' management of equipment in hazardous areas as a control to reduce fire and explosion risks through the elimination of ignition sources.



Blow-out prevention and associated well control equipment

The functionality, availability and reliability in the context of lessons learned from the BP Macondo blowout and the associated improvements in industry knowledge and practices.

Change management and human error

The ability of an operator to appropriately manage change and its effect on the offshore workforce can influence the likelihood that a worker will make an error while performing a task.

Implementing effective change management processes is widely recognised as an important and proactive approach to reducing the likelihood of human error. Operators may have acceptable processes and controls in place to manage *technical* change, but may be challenged by how to address people-related change. It is this aspect of change management, sometimes referred to as 'change leadership', which affects the likelihood of human error that can contribute to an accident or dangerous occurrence.

To assist in the design and implementation of error-reducing change management processes, NOPSEMA has developed the 'Human Factors: Change management' information paper. The paper discusses people-related change management in the context of changes to the physical working environment, procedural changes and organisational changes. The fourth in a series focusing on human factors, this information paper is designed to provide operators with advice about applying human factors tools and techniques that contribute to the reduction of risks to a level that is ALARP.

To read the 'Human Factors: Change management' information paper or for more information about human factors go to the 'Human factors' page located under 'Resources' at nopsema.gov.au



Developing appropriate environmental performance standards

When preparing an environment plan (EP) for submission, operators often ask NOPSEMA for guidance about what constitutes an ‘appropriate’ environmental performance standard.

An environmental performance standard is a specified level of performance required of a control, such as a system, piece of equipment, person or procedure, used to manage the environmental features of an offshore petroleum activity. Under Regulation 13(4) of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas (Environment) Regulations 2009, an EP must include standards that address controls. Regulation 11(1) requires NOPSEMA to assess the appropriateness of the standard when deciding whether to accept an EP.

Questions that may assist operators in determining whether their standards may be considered appropriate to meet the acceptance criteria for an EP include:

- Does the control actually address the risks and impacts it is intended to manage?
- Is there a clearly stated level of performance for the control to manage the risks and impacts captured in the standard?
- Are there standards that relate to each control which have been identified as necessary to reduce impacts and risks to as low as reasonably practicable and acceptable levels?
- Are the standards measurable and auditable?

Operators should be aware of common shortcomings in seeking to set appropriate standards. For example, the prospects of meeting acceptance criteria are limited where weak or no links are drawn between the standard, the environmental features of the activity, the risks and impacts that need to be managed, and the controls proposed for managing those risks and impacts. These factors are used to determine ‘appropriateness’ of the standards for the activity and the EP.

For further information see NOPSEMA’s Guidance Note about ‘Environment plan content requirements’ on the ‘Environment resources’ page at nopsema.gov.au

Streamlining environmental assessments

Draft Terms of Reference for the proposed strategic assessment of NOPSEMA's environmental management authorisation process for petroleum activities have been released for industry comment.

Currently, petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters that are likely to impact on matters of national environmental significance, as defined in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), are subject to regulation under both the OPGGS Act and the EPBC Act. Previous reviews have noted that this results in unnecessary duplication of environmental approval processes.

In an effort to streamline regulatory processes, the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (RET), the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities (SEWPaC) and NOPSEMA are now considering a strategic assessment of the environmental management authorisation process administered under the OPGGS Act and the Environment Regulations. The assessment would evaluate how matters of national environmental significance would be assessed and managed solely under the OPGGS Act for petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters.

The draft Terms of Reference will be available for comment until 13 September 2013. For more information visit ret.gov.au/streamlining



Information and NOPSEMA inspections

Recently, there have been cases where operators have been reluctant to provide NOPSEMA inspectors with documents on the basis that they contained commercial-in-confidence or personal information.

Under the OPGGS Act, during an inspection by NOPSEMA, an inspector may exercise a power to access an operator's documents containing commercial-in-confidence and personal information. Inspector powers are established under section 601 (for 'Petroleum Project Inspectors') and clauses 50–52 of Schedule 3 (for 'OHS Inspectors') to the OPGGS Act. Under these provisions, inspectors have the power to take extracts from, or make copies of, any documents relating to the petroleum activity or facility covered by the inspection.

An operator is obliged by law to provide NOPSEMA with reasonable assistance to access original documents in full during an inspection and personal information or commercial-in-confidence information may not be excluded or redacted. Taking extracts may be necessary where information not relevant to the inspection is contained within documents. Under the OPGGS Act, any person whose conduct is found to obstruct or hinder an inspector in exercising his or her powers is committing an offence.

NOPSEMA has legal responsibilities for appropriately using and maintaining information it collects. Documents collected during an inspection are treated confidentially and can only be used for the purposes of NOPSEMA's legislated functions under the OPGGS Act and associated Regulations. Personal information is managed in accordance with NOPSEMA's [privacy policy](#) and in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Also, in relation to NOPSEMA inspections, legislation passed in February and May 2013 provides additional enforcement powers to NOPSEMA. Among other matters, the changes replace previous inspector types with a 'NOPSEMA Inspector' and will introduce aligned compliance monitoring powers once the separate *Regulatory Powers Act* comes into force. For more information, see the 'Recent changes to legislation' page at www.nopsema.gov.au



Safety Alert #57

Fast Rescue Craft unplanned descent

NOPSEMA conducted an investigation into a dangerous occurrence on an offshore facility in which a fast rescue craft (FRC) carrying four workers dropped 23 metres to sea level at a rate governed only by the inertia brake in the system.



Fortunately, no injuries were sustained by the occupants and no equipment was damaged as a result of this dangerous occurrence. If the inertia brake had failed to operate and slow the rate of descent, the manned FRC could have dropped to sea level potentially resulting in multiple fatalities or serious injuries.

Operators have a duty of care, as per Clause 9 of Schedule 3 to the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*, to “take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that the facility is safe and without risk to the health of any person at or near the facility.” This includes an obligation to:

- implement and maintain systems of work that are safe and without risk to health
- provide all members of the workforce with the information, training and supervision necessary for them to carry out their activities in a manner that does not adversely affect the safety of persons at the facility

Safety Alert #57 NOPSEMA examines the investigation into the FRC’s unplanned descent and key lessons learnt. To view the safety alert visit the ‘Safety Alerts’ page under the ‘Safety’ tab at nopsema.gov.au

Towards a model of safety culture

NOPSEMA commenced a national research program in 2012 aimed at exploring how safety culture is understood and applied within the Australian offshore petroleum industry. The program is now complete and the final report is available at nopsema.gov.au

28 facility operators participated in an online quantitative survey and a series of semi-structured interviews designed to answer three broad research questions:

- How prevalent are safety culture improvement initiatives across the industry?
- How does the industry conceptualise safety culture?
- How does the industry operationalise safety culture?

Analysis of the data collected shows that safety culture improvement initiatives are planned or implemented by the majority of participating organisations, however, the way they understand the concept of safety culture and the approaches used to create and drive safety culture change vary significantly.

To facilitate the development of effective safety culture improvement strategies, NOPSEMA recommends that the Australian offshore oil and gas industry adopts a consistent definition and model of safety culture. An operator’s safety culture improvement strategy should then be framed on this accepted definition and model of safety culture.

A safety culture definition and model, drawn from the current national program and published academic and applied literature, is proposed in the NOPSEMA report ‘Safety culture improvement initiatives in the Australian offshore petroleum industry.’

To read the report, or for more information go to the ‘Human factors’ page located under the ‘Resources’ tab at nopsema.gov.au

Activity and performance

As at 26 August 2013

Disclaimer: Data presented here may vary as further information becomes available.

Assessments

ASSESSMENTS SUBMITTED		2013		
Assessment type	Subtype	Jun	Jul	Aug
Diving start up notice	Not applicable	1	1	0
Environment plan	New	9	6	2
	Revision	4	3	3
Safety case	New	0	0	2
	Revision	4	6	5
Scope of validation	New	0	3	3
Well activity application	Not applicable	7	14	2
Well operations management plan	New	4	7	2
TOTAL		29	40	19

ASSESSMENTS NOTIFIED AND COMPLETED		Accepted/agreed/ advised			Rejected/refused/not accepted/ declined/ recalled/returned			% Notified within time regulations		
		2013								
Assessment type	Subtype	Jun	Jul	Aug	Jun	Jul	Aug	Jun	Jul	Aug
Diving start-up notice	Not applicable	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%	100%	N/A
Environment plan	New	1	2	2	0	0	0	100%	100%	100%
	Revision	2	1	0	0	0	1	100%	100%	100%
Safety case	New	1	3	0	1	1	0	100%	100%	N/A
	Revision	4	5	2	0	3	0	100%	100%	100%
Scope of validation	Not applicable	3	1	2	0	0	0	100%	100%	100%
Well activity application	Not applicable	5	9	1	0	0	0	100%	100%	100%
Well operations management plan	New	2	2	1	0	0	0	100%	100%	100%
TOTAL		19	24	8	1	4	1			

Note: In some instances, a single assessment may be submitted for multiple facilities
Assessments still in progress are not included

Inspections

Type	2012				2013							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Facilities /wells / activities inspected	5	10	18	6	8	15	15	16	17	19	8	3

Complaints

Type	2012						2013					
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
OHS complaints	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
EM complaints	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Note: A number of complaints were re-categorised as 'information only'.

Injuries

Type	2012				2013							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Lost time injuries (LTI >1 day) ^a	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	0	0	Data not available
Alternative duties injuries (ADI)	3	1	7	4	4	1	2	7	4	4	3	
Medical treatment injuries (MTI)	4	4	6	2	1	3	0	4	2	2	2	
Total recordable cases (TRC)	9	6	14	7	6	5	5	12	7	6	5	

a. LTI incl. lost time injuries less than 3 days

Note: As reported under OPGGS(S) Regulation 2.42. (injury summaries submitted not less than 15 days after the end of each month)

Some operator reports were outstanding at the time of this publication

Enforcements

Enforcement action types ^a	2012						2013					
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Improvement notice	5	23	0	3	0	1	0	2	9	4	2	1
Intent to withdraw WOMP acceptance	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prohibition notice	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Request for revised SC	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Request for revised EP	0	0	0	1	0	16	4	6	5	0	0	1
Written advice/warning	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	2	2	4	0	0
TOTAL	5	25	2	4	2	19	7	10	17	8	2	4

a. Does not include directions, verbal advice/warnings or investigation-related notices (do not disturb notice or removal of plant or sample)

Note: 'Request for revised EP' data includes one request in Oct-Dec 2012 and 20 requests in Jan-March 2013 for revision to an environment plan transitioned from the former designated authorities

Incident notifications

INCIDENT TYPE		2013		
		June	July	Aug
Accidents and dangerous occurrences	Death or serious injury	0	0	1
	Incapacitation ≥ 3 days LTI	0	0	0
	Accidents total	0	0	1
	Could have caused death or serious injury	5	2	2
	Could have caused incapacitation ≥ 3 days LTI	0	0	0
	Fire or explosion	0	1	1
	Collision marine vessel and facility	0	0	0
	Uncontrolled HC release >1 300 kg	2	0	2
	Uncontrolled HC release >300 kg	0	1	0
	Uncontrolled PL release >80 12 500 L	0	0	0
	Uncontrolled PL release >12 500 L	0	0	0
	Unplanned event implement emergency response plan	8	16	7
	Damage to safety-critical equipment	6	6	9
	Other kind needing immediate investigation	2	3	3
	Well kick >50 barrels	0	0	0
	Pipeline – substantial risk of accident	0	0	0
	Pipeline – kind needing immediate investigation	0	0	0
	Pipeline – significant damage	0	0	0
Dangerous occurrences total	23	29	24	
Accidents and dangerous occurrences total		23	29	25
Reportable environmental incidents	Hydrocarbon/petroleum fluid release	3	3	0
	Chemical release	1	0	1
	Drilling fluid/mud release	1	1	0
	Fauna incident	2	0	0
	Reportable EM incidents total	7	4	1
Recordable environmental incidents	Non HC air emissions	1	0	Data not available
	Breach of procedural control	2	3	
	Chemical spill	3	3	
	Hydrocarbon gas release/air emissions	3	1	
	Hydrocarbon spill (<80 L)	8	3	
	Solid waste discharge/dropped object	3	1	
	Other unplanned liquid discharge	0	1	
	Spill - no discharge to marine environment	1	1	
	Equipment not functioning	0	1	
Recordable EM incidents total	21	14		
EM incidents total		28	18	1
Not reportable incidents	OHS not notifiable	4	1	1
	EM not notifiable	0	0	0
	Recordable environmental incident	2	0	0
Not reportables total		6	1	1
GRAND TOTAL		57	48	27

Note: As notified under OPGGS(S) Regulation 2.41 and OPGGS(E) Regulation 26

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS					
ATBA	Area to be avoided	HC	Hydrocarbon	PSZ	Petroleum safety zone
EM	Environmental management	OHS	Occupational health and safety	SC	Safety case
EP	Environment plan	PL	Petroleum liquid		



Schedule of events

Events listed below are those at which NOPSEMA is presenting, exhibiting or has an organisational role

- 24 September 2013 MarineSafe forum, Perth
- 21 October 2013 Safety culture technical workshop, Perth
- 21 October 2013 International Offshore Petroleum Environmental Regulators' annual general meeting, Perth
- 21-23 October 2013 5th International Regulators' Offshore Safety conference, Perth
- 24 October 2013 Acoustic impacts and marine life technical seminar, Perth
- 24-25 October 2013 International Regulators' Forum annual general meeting, Perth
- 26-27 November 2013 IChemE Hazards Australasia conference, Perth



Feedback

NOPSEMA welcomes your comments and suggestions. Please direct media enquiries, requests for publications, and enquiries about NOPSEMA events to communications@nopsema.gov.au Operators and other employers are encouraged to circulate this newsletter to their workforce.

Past issues of this newsletter are available at nopsema.gov.au

Subscribe

NOPSEMA has recently expanded its online subscription service. To receive the latest news and developments from Australia's national regulator for the oil and gas industry please complete the online [subscription form](#). NOPSEMA's services include news and information on environmental management, HSRs, media releases, safety alerts and *the Regulator* newsletter.

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