

Putting the industry on the road to safety

OGP recommended practice focuses on eliminating driving incidents

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IN OUR MODERN society, driving has become almost second nature for most people. Motorized travel is so common, people hardly think about it anymore. But what's not natural – and what people must think about – is the ever-increasing fatality rates associated with road accidents.

According to the World Health Organization, road accidents kill 1.2 million people every year worldwide and injure 50 million more. WHO studies predict that if recent trends continue, the number of road deaths and injuries will rise by more than 60 percent between 2000 and 2020.

According to statistics provided by the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (OGP), driving-related incidents are the single largest cause of fatalities in OGP member company operations.

In an industry that is constantly striving to achieve a zero-incident vision, this is an unacceptable statistic. And the OGP's Land Transportation Safety Taskforce is bent on making changes.

Formed in 2002, the taskforce is made up of about 20 producer companies and Schlumberger Oilfield Services, as well as OGP and the International Association of Drilling Contractors. It was armed with the mission of drafting a set of driving safety guidelines to help reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the number of serious road traffic incidents and fatalities.

After about three years, those guidelines have been finalized, said **Derek Tate**, NSA & Global Driving Manager of Schlumberger, a taskforce member.

"Schlumberger is recognized as an industry leader in land transport and driving safety, so we provided the experiences we've had with our driving safety program and provided a core foundation for the OGP document," Mr Tate said. The key players of the taskforce then joined hands to share the best practices from each company.



An aerial shot shows Schlumberger's driving center in Kellyville, Okla. The company, "recognized as an industry leader in land transport and driving safety," also has centers in Canada and Mexico and is in the process of building a new one in Russia. It also has small regional ones in Argentina, Venezuela and Siberia.

What resulted is the OGP Land Transportation Safety Recommended Practice. It was intentionally developed to be sufficiently generic so that all companies within the oil and gas industry – operators, contractors or subcontractors – could use it, in all regions of the world.

"The idea is for operators to implement and then lead contractors and subcontractors," Mr Tate said. "One of the challenges is that while many operators have very successful driving safety programs of their own, difficulties arise when they try to transfer that to contractor companies. But by having an industry standard, all operators and contractors will have the same level of expectations."

Although the OGP has had the Land Transport Safety Guidelines in place since 1996, the document never gained full traction, Mr Tate said. So the new task force set out to revise those guidelines and instead come up with a land transport management system that is easier to implement.

The new OGP recommendations are "more of minimum standards rather than an ideal state," he said. "Instead of setting the ideal very high and making it difficult to attain, we have set a minimum standard of performance."

Over the past decade, while there have been consistent and continuing reductions in the number of fatalities and injuries on the drill floor, progress in

eliminating driving-related incidents have apparently been harder to manage.

“Driving is quite commonly an unsupervised task,” Mr Tate noted. “So you have an employee in a vehicle, where it may seem that they’re independent of policies and practices. So they revert to at-risk behavior.” And this problem has, until now, gone largely ignored.

“This isn’t a new problem, but as the drilling industry has reduced the number of injuries and fatalities on the drill floor, the number of driving-related fatalities has become that much more apparent,” Mr Tate said.

Even at Schlumberger, an industry leader in many areas, a driving safety program had been in place for years but didn’t kick into full gear until 2000. Since then, however, the company has seen its driving-related incidents reduced by nearly 75 percent.

And Mr Tate notes that he is seeing increasing interest and concern around the globe, from all sectors in the industry.

“I’m at a conference in Cairo right now where we’re rolling out the OGP recommended practice, and if attendance were an indication, I’d say interest is very high – we’ve got great turnout,” he said.

OGP is aiming for full implementation of its recommended practice by the end of 2008. The group recommends that the guidelines be applied to all land transport activities in the E&P industry.

Topics covered in the practice are:

- Seatbelts – Occupants of any vehicle shall use seatbelts at all times;
- Driver training and qualification – Drivers must be appropriately licensed, trained, and have the functional capacity to operate the vehicle;
- In-vehicle monitoring systems – Vehicles shall be fitted with an In-Vehicle Monitoring System or Vehicle Data Recorder that produces journey data;
- Use of cell phones and two-way communications devices – Drivers shall neither initiate nor answer a mobile telephone call while driving a vehicle;
- Journey management plans – Managers at every level shall question the need for journeys;
- Substance abuse – Drivers shall not operate a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, narcotics or med-

ication that could impair the operator’s functional capability;

- Driver fitness and alertness – All persons employed as drivers and persons regularly driving on company business must be medically assessed with a minimum follow-up every five years to ensure they have functional capacity;
- Vehicle specifications – Vehicles shall be fit for purpose based on assessment of usage and be maintained in safe working order; and
- Management systems – Company and contractor management systems shall include requirements for managing land transport safety and the effective implementation of the Land Transportation Safety Recommended Practice.

Some topics, such as seatbelts, are common enough and should already be covered by governmental regulations in most areas of the world. Others though, Mr Tate said, require extra company attention.

The in-vehicle monitoring systems, for example, require more than just a financial commitment during installation, he noted. “The data needs to be evaluated, and coaching needs to take place for the drivers. The monitoring device is relatively ineffective without the coaching to affect driver behavior.”

Other topics touch on what may be considered gray areas. Mr Tate notes that eliminating the use of cell phones during land transport activities involves potential changes in business culture and practices, and compliance will come down to the company’s decision.

“Some people may feel that using hands-free devices (while driving) is sufficiently safe. Plus, it’s not illegal. So with OGP’s recommended practice, this becomes a situation of something not being illegal, but you’re not supposed to do it,” he said.

The guidelines also outline eight elements of a management system for land transport safety. They are:

- Visible leadership and commitment;
- Policy statement with strategic objectives;
- A management structure in place with adequate resources and documentation to record program performance;
- A hazard identification and risk assessment of land transport operations;

- Planning for changes in personnel, vehicles, processes and procedures, as well as contingency and emergency planning;

- Written procedures for all safety critical land transport activities with a monitoring system and an assignment of responsibility for initiating corrective action;

- A system of planned and systematic audits;

- Reviews of the management system by senior management at appropriate intervals.

Mr Tate notes that employees must also stand up and take responsibility.

“It takes management leadership to initiate the OGP recommended practice,” he said, “but there’s also the duty of care on employees’ part. For example, the company may provide a hard hat, but the employee needs to wear it.”

With work now completed on drafting the OGP recommended practice, OGP is working to spread the message and encourage all industry companies – OGP members or not – to adopt the guidelines.

“Ultimately, the guidelines are there to help the industry realize a journey to zero incidents,” he said.

As with any HSE initiative, there are obstacles to be overcome.

“I think the biggest challenge is corporate commitment,” Mr Tate said. “But once you decide to do it, you just do it.” And for the companies that think they just don’t have the resources to pursue this?

“You shouldn’t look at it that way,” he advised. “It’s a matter of what you can do, and that’s the concept of industry practice. We at Schlumberger find that having the program is in the best interest of all stakeholders. It’s responsible business practice, and it makes good business sense.”

According to WHO, road incidents are fully preventable. Driving-related fatalities and injuries are not random, unavoidable events – even in the drilling industry. We just need to work harder at prevention.

And for the skeptics out there who don’t believe that the zero-incident vision can be achieved? Mr Tate responds: “If you never try, you never find out.” ■