



## IADC Guidelines improving safety for Gulf of Mexico cargo handling

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**MAYBE SMUG IS** not the word, but there is a pervading sense that the Gulf of Mexico is drilling's cutting edge. It's the cradle of offshore drilling, its largest market and playground for a hefty portion of sexy new drilling rigs technology.

But the Gulf is behind the curve in a big way and it affects safety. In about 99% of the world's drilling markets, rig-bound cargo on an oil-service boat is pre-slung, ready for the hoist onto the rig. In the Gulf of Mexico, conversely, the practice has been to load loosely on the supply boat the tubulars, bits, mud, food, and all the sundry materials and gear that keeps a rig turning to the right. This cargo is bundled into crane-ready loads only when the boat docks at the rig.

The US Gulf of Mexico is virtually alone among the world's drilling markets in routinely requiring a member of the rig crew to be lowered to the boat deck to move cargo. If nothing else, eliminating this step would save two personnel moves, and their potential for accidents.

Plus, the rig hand is not part of the boat crew, played no part in loading the cargo and was not privy to any job safety analysis (JSA) conducted by the boat crew regarding the loading. JSAs are central to job planning for safety.

### STATISTICS SAY...

IADC statistics reveal that accidents involving rig crew on workboats accounted for 7% of all rig lost-time injuries in the US Gulf of Mexico during the last 15 years. In 2001 in the Gulf of Mexico, 14 lost-time incidents involving work boats were reported to IADC, along with 35 recordable incidents. Meanwhile, IADC only recorded 4 LTIs for offshore operations involving workboats everywhere else in the world. And data produced by the US Minerals Management Service shows that since 1998, lifting of materials and personnel on fixed platforms, MODUs and floating facilities has accounted for 18% of all injuries and 28% of all fatalities in the Gulf of Mexico.

### SO... IADC WRITES GUIDELINES

Not great news. So in 2001, IADC formed a task group to tackle the problem. Their objective was to develop guidelines helpful to supply-boat companies, contractors and operators alike and embracing the minimum requirements from regulation and industry best practices.

### AND THE RESULTS ARE...

A review of current IADC statistics shows a big improvement. Recordable incidents are down from 35 and 33 in 2001 and 2002, respectively, to 10 and 12 in 2003 and 2004. (A recordable incident is one in which a person is injured and receives medical treatment beyond rudimentary first aid.)

That's a decrease of 66% from 2001 to 2004, an achievement we should be proud of. With all due humility, I won't claim all the glory for the IADC guidelines. Still, it's my opinion that the related outreach and communication between operators, supply boats and contractors has improved boat/rig cargo handling.

Recently, an informal IADC survey of offshore contractors indicated that about 85% of loads are pre-slung upon arrival at the rig. The practice of transferring rig personnel to boats has also declined, though not vanished.

In the deepwater GOM, load preslinging is universal. That's not always the case on the Shelf, though. IADC encourages operators to require preslinging for all cargo and to use boat crew, not rig personnel, to hook up the loads.

### DOWNLOAD FROM IADC.ORG

The IADC Cargo Handling Guidelines are available from the Offshore Division section of the IADC website. You can download a PDF from [www.iadc.org/committees/offshore](http://www.iadc.org/committees/offshore).

The IADC Guidelines are not a rule, a statute, a Specification or even a Recommended Procedure, in the strict sense. We are not breaking new ground here. Instead we hope to "lift" awareness to a new level for GOM safety. ■