

Decommissioning Network

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The worldwide number of offshore oil- and gas platforms that will be decommissioned in the next decades greatly exceeds the number of new platforms still to be installed. The complexity of abandonment projects varies wildly from area to area. Whereas abandonment and removing of topsides and jackets is rather straight forward in shallower waters, it could be a kind of impossible challenge for large, concrete structures in deep water. This indicates the complexity for a general worldwide approach towards abandonment.

The current practice plugging and abandoning of wells is assumed to consume more than 50% of the entire decommissioning budget and costs tend to be greatly underestimated. Normally wells can be plugged and decommissioned already during platform operation. Well plugging can be carried out by platform drilling facilities if these are available. If the original wells were drilled from a jack-up, then a jack-up will generally be needed to plug them. Experience in the US indicates that plug and abandonment can be carried out quickly without a jack-up at lower cost.

As the economy is moving to a future with renewable energy, especially in shallower waters, opportunities arise to re-use existing oil and gas infrastructure rather than decommissioning.

Worldwide oil companies and contractors work together on new technologies for abandonment activities. These new methods shall reduce the enormous costs, which these abandonment activities impose on the companies and also on the governments.

Although legislation varies from country to country, it could be valuable for governments to know what is happening in other parts of the world, therefore the IRF has set up a Decommissioning Network, chaired by The Netherlands, with the following objectives:

- To ensure that plug and abandoning of wells is conducted as such that chances for future leakages are negligible.
- To ensure that decommissioning of offshore facilities in IRF countries is conducted in a safe manner and with minimal remaining adverse effect to the (marine) environment.
- To learn from earlier executed decommissioning projects.
- How to deal with the fact that operating companies are delaying decommissioning projects due to current economic conditions (e.g. low oil prices) leaving obsolete equipment in place longer than strictly necessary.

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