

MEMBER COUNTRY PROFILE – UNITED KINGDOM

Country: United Kingdom

Organisation: Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) in a partnership Competent Authority for the regulation of major accidents to people or environment in the offshore sector.

Regime Scope: Within the Competent Authority, HSE leads in regulating offshore health and safety issues and OPRED takes the lead in regulating offshore environmental matters. This involves jointly assessing safety cases; assessing and approving oil pollution emergency plans; inspecting wells and other statutory notifications; undertaking planned inspections; investigating accidents, incidents and complaints; and taking regulatory enforcement action.

Administering Agency /Arrangements:

HSE is a UK Government, non-departmental public body reporting to an executive board.

OPRED is part of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which is a UK Government Department.

The Competent Authority is a partnership arrangement between HSE and OPRED to regulate major hazard offshore safety and environmental risks

Legislation Type: National Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and supporting legislation applicable to all industries for health and safety. Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and supporting legislation applicable to all offshore installations in relation to oil pollution emergency plans (OPEPs).

Extent of Government Approval:

Duty holders must prepare and submit a safety case to the Competent Authority for assessment and acceptance, before an offshore installation can operate in the UK sector.

Responsible persons must prepare and submit an OPEP to the Competent Authority for review and approval before offshore oil & gas activities with the potential for pollution by oil can commence.

Nature of Duties Imposed: Primarily goal setting legislation which sets required standards and objectives to be achieved by duty holders, for the continued safe operation of their installations and their pollution response arrangements.

Physical Objects in the Regime: Offshore specific legislation applies to Offshore Installations as defined in the regulations. These include fixed and floating production installations, plus non-production installations such as MODUs, flotel and others, according to their exposure to major hazard risks. In total, there are around 290 surface installations and another approx. 25 mobile drilling rigs in the UK sector on an annual basis.

Assurance Mechanisms: Both HSE & OPRED have Government Inspectorates. Inspections of duty holders and their installations against the control of major hazards as described in the safety case and compliance with relevant statutory provisions, as well as compliance against their OPEPs.

Financial Basis: Cost recovery for upstream oil and gas industry by cost recovering an hourly rate for certain work.

Environmental Regulation Responsibilities: The UK HSE regulates health and safety in the offshore oil and gas industry. OPRED is responsible for the regulation of environmental and pollution control matters in relation to the UK offshore oil and gas industry. This covers the full life cycle of offshore operations from environmental assessment prior to any offshore activity commencing, through to decommissioning at end of field life. It also includes the approval of Oil Pollution Emergency Plans (OPEPs), without which an offshore installation cannot commence operations. Both organisations cooperate in partnership.

Oil Spill Response: The implementation of any counter pollution measures deployed to minimise a pollution incident is the responsibility of the operator, their third-party oil spill responder and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). MCA, an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible, if required, for deploying any counter pollution measures to minimise pollution incidents, and the Secretary of State's Representative (SoSRep), who works for both DfT and OPRED, has ultimate powers of intervention for stopping the source of any pollution incident.

Transparency: A website hosted on the HSE's website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/osdr/index.htm> provides a wide range of information relating to the functioning of the Competent Authority partnership, with guidance, reporting arrangements and our governance arrangements. There are also links to the relevant HSE and OPRED webpages providing annual offshore health, safety & environmental statistics, reports of key intervention programmes, full details of HSE's internal assessment procedures and standards, and safety and environmental alerts and information.

Research Topics:

10k wave - extreme environmental loading

Integrity assessment of bolts used for flanged joints

Stress Corrosion cracking at near ambient temperatures

Review of root causes of failed weldments in service

Fatigue in the offshore wind industry

Current opportunities for offshore sector collaboration with HSE include the following research projects/proposals:

Optimising offshore working patterns

Remote visual inspection

Profile Date: December 2020