



Communiqué

International Regulators' Forum Holds 2023 Annual General Meeting and Conference in Perth, Australia Focused on Offshore Petroleum Safety

6 October 2023

The International Regulators' Forum (IRF) commenced its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 2 October 2023 hosted by NOPSEMA (Australia) in Perth, Australia. The AGM was attended in person or virtually by offshore petroleum health and safety regulator leaders from its 11 member countries – Australia (Chair), Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

NOPSEMA (Australia) also hosted the IRF Conference in Perth, Australia on 3 & 4 October 2023. The Conference brought together over 250 key international personnel and thought leaders from the IRF and other offshore petroleum regulators, industry, members of the offshore workforce, and government to discuss mutual challenges and opportunities, and drive continuous improvement in safety outcomes. With a theme of “**It’s all about risk**”, the Conference program consisted of plenaries, specific sessions, panel discussions and an innovative live production to explore emerging safety issues – based on the common issues faced by IRF members, which allowed for audience discussion between each scene of the key topics. Video recordings and copies of the presentations made at the Conference will be made available in due course to encourage wider sharing of the issues discussed. Canada will host the next IRF Conference during 2025.

The AGM then continued on 5 and 6 October 2023 to consider the matters discussed at the Conference and updates of matters that had arisen since the May 2023 IRF Mid-Year Meeting. Representatives of global industry associations, the International Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) and the International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC) joined to provide industry perspectives. The [IOGP data](#) for 2022 showed a very concerning increase in global onshore and offshore fatalities in both 2021 and 2022. The largest increase was in contractor personnel. Lost-Time-Injuries (LTIs) also showed a considerable increase in 2022. The AGM noted that [IRF data](#) which only reflects IRF countries offshore activities) may also be trending similarly. Responding to the evolving energy spectrum, the IRF formed a sub-committee to address safety risks in offshore renewables.

The IRF reviewed its “[Opportunity Statement](#)” (OS) initiative which was designed to identify significant and common safety hazards and then for industry to develop and implement effective significant risk reduction measures. Further details are available on the IRF website. The “[Well Control](#)” OS was seen to have made considerable progress with the development of guidance by IOGP to address the key well control risks of pore pressure and fracture gradient. Application of this or other risk control measures is now required to deliver the outcomes required of industry. The OSs of “[Investigations and Learning from Incidents](#)” and “[Digitalization](#)” were also seen to have progressed.

The AGM and Conference identified the key issues facing the safety of offshore activities and may be broadly grouped as follows:

- Asset integrity. This included a need for industry to manage all activities based on the whole lifecycle, for example, the consequences of deferring maintenance that could lead to longer term degradation of the facility, suitability for re-use, or the consequences for successful decommissioning. The risks of extreme weather events, assets operating beyond their design life, ongoing performance of fixed and floating facilities, absence of fabric coating maintenance, and confidence in inspection, verification and maintenance processes were discussed. The role of executive decision-making was seen as the likely root cause of the long-term consequences.
- Decommissioning. The importance was discussed of ensuring that wells are permanently sealed and equipment properly decommissioned was highlighted, including the risks to workers undertaking these tasks.
- Transitioning and expansion of the energy spectrum. This covered the broad and long-term range of risk issues relating to offshore energy production encompassing societal and governmental expectations, the development of offshore renewable energy, attracting and retaining a skilled, diverse and competent workforce, an aging workforce, Carbon Capture & Storage, H₂, technology, digitalization, cyber security, and the pace of innovation.

At this time of an apparent trend of increasing industry risks ranging from personnel safety, asset integrity, and transitioning and expansion of the energy spectrum, the IRF members called upon industry leaders in their vital role of exercising executive oversight and accountability to ensure all aspects of safety.