

Super Puma return – who's kidding who?



The OCG trade unions sitting on the "Offshore Helicopter Safety Leadership Group" (OHSLG) were given just a few days notice about an extraordinary OHSLG meeting being staged in Stavanger, Norway. Subsequently the same day the CAA released a press briefing indicating they were lifting the restrictions on the Super Puma variants which have been grounded since the tragedy in Norway, April last year. A deputy stepped in to attend as regular officers were already committed to critical negotiations aimed at trying to avert industrial relations unrest. On completion of the 'extraordinary OHSLG meeting', the trade unions issued the following statement;

We, the Trade Union's (TU's) representing oil and gas workers, continue to have significant concerns about the current situation around the operation of the H225 and 'Super Puma' type aircraft in the North Sea and the first of these is the way in which the regulators have gone about this announcement. We've been told repeatedly the "Offshore Helicopter Safety Leadership Group" (OHSLG) would be the forum through which all communications would be developed. Even in the email on Friday morning 7th July calling for the 'extraordinary meeting' in Stavanger, the CAA talk about holding a; "summit on the 225 to

update all parties". However, the CAA then put out a press statement embargoed until 20.00 on that Friday night telling all parties what they've decided! What's the point of having a meeting to "update" anyone?

This apparent rush to release a statement without engagement of OHSLG and the timing of the release also give cause for concern. The only conclusion we can reach about the way this has been handled is that a commercial imperative exists and is taking precedence over appropriate engagement and consultation with the most important group in this situation, the offshore workforce. We shouldn't have to remind the regulators and manufacturer, but the facts around "Super Puma" type aircraft are the most important issues to our constituents so we will; this aircraft type has been in the sea 6-times in little over 8-years; 65 people have been rescued from the sea; 33 people have been killed; and we still don't have a root cause for the Norwegian tragedy! This is therefore a seriously important issue for our constituents.

The timing of the CAA announcement is also being linked to the questionable 'survey' being run by Airbus. This survey has been widely criticised by workers, but the fact Airbus are refusing to allow independent assessment of the

survey findings and to have these findings released publicly is only fuelling scepticism about the actions of Airbus. This scepticism has been made all the worse since the CAA release on July 7th.

As TU's, we fully support the principal of workforce engagement and we feel that Airbus and the regulators have fundamentally failed in this. We (the TU's) therefore find ourselves at odds with both Airbus and the regulators. As we see it, there is only one way to remedy this situation and that is a comprehensive and meaningful engagement exercise of offshore workers. We will therefore be requesting that all North Sea oil companies commence a structured and consistent survey of workers about this aircraft type. Until such an engagement exercise has been completed, the position of the TU's representing oil and gas workers will be that our members refuse to fly.

Additionally, and as a consequence of the CAA actions, we will be renewing calls for the inquiry proposed after the UK Transport Select Committee's recommendations in 2014/15. We will also convene an early Offshore Coordinating Group meeting to discuss the continued TU membership representation on the OHSLG, as clearly with such an impasse our participation is now questionable.

OCA - The ballots have been run by Unite, GMB and RMT and the Tory legislation on minimum 50% turnout thresholds were not achieved for the most part, only in areas with relatively low membership. This means that industrial action cannot take place. However, we remain committed to finding a solution to the current industrial relations mess we are in. The Trade Unions and Shop Stewards are meeting with the OCA employers to explore all options that might let all parties move forward. Look out for further details in the coming days.

COTA - The ballots of catering staff have started with Unite and are about to start with RMT as this edition of OCG News is being produced. The Unite ballot will close on August 18th, followed by the RMT ballot on August 24th. We urge all catering members to participate in their respective ballots and to return a resounding "YES; YES" mandate for industrial action and action short of strike.

The catering crews are extremely influential in the offshore environment and for too long have been undervalued by the industry. Many operators will very quickly see just how critical these hard working and undervalued members of the offshore team are when they stop work! Look out for the ballot returns in a few weeks' time.

Aviation - Talks continue between the helicopter operators, their staff and Trade Union reps about the proposal for cuts to terms and conditions. Like many other disciplines in the oil and gas sector the pilots and support staff have suffered significant losses in personnel and their earning capacity. It seems for this group like others, the industry will seek to squeeze as much and as hard as they can.

Disaster - The terrible scenes we all witnessed at the Grenfell Tower fire in London were disturbing and upsetting. We at OCG see this disaster as the building industry's equivalent of our Piper Alpha disaster. The fire on June 14th claimed as yet an untold number of lives and has spread fear and anxiety through communities up and down the country. The same was the case for oil and gas workers on installations across the North Sea after witnessing the scale of the disaster and shocking loss of life on Piper. We lost 167 of our colleagues that night 29 years ago and it took an inquiry over a year to develop the standards which we continue to use today.

A similar inquiry to that conducted on Piper must be staged to look at Grenfell. Everything from the regulator, through the regulations, control of work, working practices, emergency systems and safety standards must be analysed. Another horrifying disaster on this scale must be avoided at all costs. People should be able to sleep soundly in their homes

knowing that everything, every single aspect associated with the underlying causes of Grenfell have been assessed and considered, and addressed. Government must act to ensure this is done; anything short of this will be an injustice and a failure.

Our thoughts are with all those directly and indirectly affected by Grenfell.

A WIN FOR THE WORKERS!

Employment Tribunal fees are abolished! The Supreme Court verdict follows a four-year fight by Unison and is a victory for everyone in work. The UK's highest court has unanimously ruled that the government was acting unlawfully and unconstitutionally when it introduced the fees four years ago and the government will now have to repay up to £32m to claimants since July 2013, when fees were introduced by then Lord Chancellor Chris Grayling.

From July 26th, anyone who has been treated illegally or unfairly at work will no longer have to pay to take their employers to tribunal – as a direct result of UNISON's legal challenge.

Unison general secretary Dave Prentis said:

"This is absolutely a tremendous victory; it's probably the biggest victory of employment rights in this country."

"We'll never know how many people missed out because they couldn't afford the expense of fees. But at last this tax on justice has been lifted."

Employment tribunal fees were introduced on 29 July 2013 and started at around £160 for a type A claim, such as wage claims, breach of contract, and £250 for a type B claim, covering issues such as unfair dismissal, race and sex discrimination. There was also a further hearing fee of £230 for Type A and £950 for Type B claims. Appeals at the employment appeal tribunal attracted an additional £400 lodging and £1,200 hearing fee. It also said that some people would not bring cases to employment tribunals because paying the fees would render any financial reward pointless. The court's summary added claimants in low or middle income households could not afford the fees; ***"without sacrificing ordinary and reasonable expenditure for substantial periods of time"***. This is a result!

Introducing Connected Competence



Connected Competence is an initiative that aims to drive competence standardisation through collaboration across the UK oil & gas industry. Aker Solutions, Amec Foster Wheeler, Bilfinger Salamis UK, Petrofac, Stork and Wood Group, in partnership with the Engineering and Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), are in the process of introducing their offshore and site employees to Connected Competence and the three-year competence assurance cycle.

The key areas of standardisation are qualifications, base pre-mobilisation training, industry trade specific knowledge tests and ongoing cycles of technical tests. Connected Competence will begin with certain technical trades and this number will grow as the initiative develops.

The Connected Competence companies have agreed a base level of competence for each trade and will work together to share information relating to their employees' training history. This will streamline training, assure the base level of competence and assist with the efficient transfer of employees between companies.

Why is this good news?

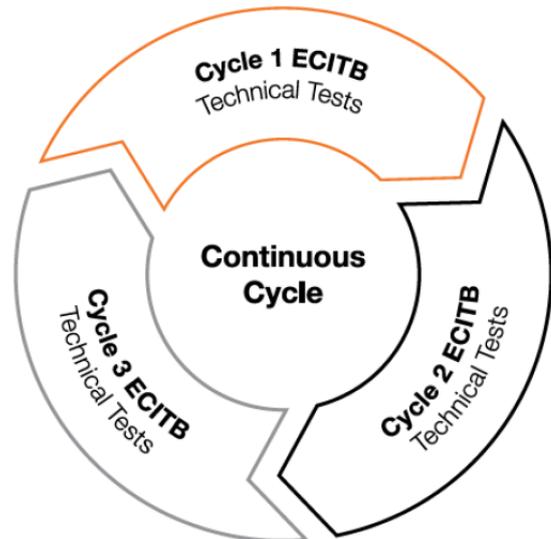
As an offshore or site employee of a Connected Competence company, you will have a standardised way to demonstrate your technical competence. You will have ownership of your certificates with access to your competence data, which will reduce duplicate training and assessments. When assessments are required, these will be carried out at an ECITB approved UK test centre. The ECITB is working to build a UK-wide network of approved test centres so that in future, assessments can be carried out at a venue local to you, meaning less time away from home during your field breaks.

If you choose to move to another Connected Competence company, additional benefits include the efficient transfer of your competence data between

organisations and continuation of your competence and development cycle instead of starting again.

How does Connected Competence cycle work?

You will enter the Connected Competence cycle by being booked on a cycle one technical test.



The technical tests are a series of onshore competence assessments designed to demonstrate that you have the base minimum required for your specific trade. The first part is 10 computer-based, multiple-choice knowledge test questions, which require a score of 80% to pass. Upon passing this, you will proceed to the practical assessment.

Each trade has different tests that are required to be completed each year, over a three-year cycle period. You will sit the next cycle of technical tests within 12 months of completing the previous cycle's technical tests. On completion of the third cycle of tests, the employee will go back to the cycle one tests. The yearly cycles were agreed between the Technical Authorities of the Connected

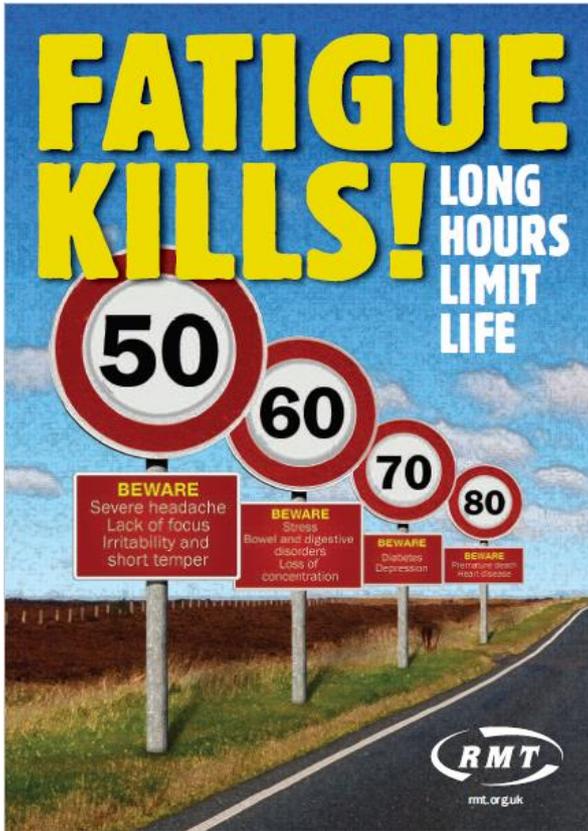
Competence companies as the base minimum required for the specified trades. There is no increase in difficulty as the years' progress.

What happens next?

Your employer will begin rolling out Connected Competence across your organisation on a phased basis and will liaise with you directly when appropriate. An employee Q&A and contact details for your employer's Connected Competence focal point are available on the website:

www.connectedcompetence.co.uk

OCG ROADSHOWS RETURN!
COME ALONG AND SAY HELLO - LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR CONCERNS
ALL OFFSHORE WORKERS WELCOME
HULL - WED 2ND AUG - HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS
MIDDLESBROUGH - THURS 3RD AUG - HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS



Airbus want to hear from you!

The OCG are well aware of your views about helicopter safety as it is a subject which is raised during all of our regular meetings and surveys, it's up there as one of the most important things you are concerned about.

We have had significant feedback about the H225 in particular and now it appears the aircraft manufacturer, Airbus, wants to hear from you. We've been circulating the details for the survey far and wide and we've had some feedback ourselves, some of the more frequent comments are reflected in the graphic below.

Stay updated on OCG by registering with Nikki at ocg.project.coord@gmail.com

It would be advantageous to all if the survey were to run for a suitable length of time to allow everyone concerned to participate. Given that the majority of us work a three on three off rota and others work various rota's varying from four and four to an adhoc basis, I'm not convinced the survey will be running long enough to get a true representation of all passengers' views. As it is, there's every chance that at least half of the North Sea offshore potential users will not be aware of the survey. My request is that you run the survey for at least another six weeks to ensure maximum awareness and hopefully get meaningful feedback.



If you haven't yet completed the Airbus survey we urge you to do so. We think we know your views on the Super Puma, you've told us often enough, now let Airbus know what you think!

Done the survey and said I was unlikely to ever fly in it again. I thought the survey was a total box ticking exercise by airbus with no provision for comments and thoughts on the flying skip they call a chopper.



Are they mad, no-one wants to fly in those death traps.

I would like to add my voice to the Super Puma survey. These aircraft are cramped and uncomfortable, and have time and again been proved to be unfit for use. Of course the Super Puma owners will state that improvements now make them safe, words that we have heard before, which proved to be fatally wrong!

Link to survey - <http://www.airbushelicopterssurvey.com/>