

## **THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF OUR INDUSTRY ARE AGAINST US; OR ARE THEY?**

The fundamental awareness of the need to manage Safety, Security, Health and the Environment is well determined and the processes that can usefully be applied are well recognised. So how is it that we still manage to kill individuals in accidents that are monotonous in their familiarity, and in large numbers in catastrophic occurrences that offer nothing new in their root causes?

I believe that we work in a potentially dangerous industry and that unexpected harm resulting from circumstances that could not have been reasonably foreseen is something we have to accept in our work. However, I feel that it is not reasonable to harm people in the same way repeatedly or accept failure of controls and management designed to protect people.

Despite all we have learnt from bitter experience (the examples of Piper Alpha and Bhopal will suffice), there are still believers and non-believers and the short-term gains of expediency too often obscure the long-term quality investment potential of more complete management of projects and business. And therein lies the question regarding our demographics. Will new young blood, divorced from the old school by several generations denied to our industry by economic expediency, have sufficient strength of character to produce more believers? Or, will they be sucked into the culture whereby our industry and its regulators confound their own ambitions (BP Texas City is a pertinent example, with due deference to the *mea maxima culpa* of BP who are certainly not alone)?

Current statistical trends in the Geophysical sector of the oil and gas industry show a steady increase in fatalities recorded by the high profile contractors and operators. The hidden, unreported correlation could be exponentially worse, compounded by an industry reticence to recognise the increasing number of fatalities resulting from security situations where people are being put in harms way for commercial gain.

I believe that today is a good time for everyone in our industry to ask themselves what they might do for their industry, before their conscience, or worse still, their relatives, find out what the industry might do for them.

### *Note on author:*

*Richard Llewellyn has been working continuously in the seismic industry since 1974 in all environments and operations, starting as survey assistant on land in the UK then starting in marine as a back deck helper in 1981. Before the seismic industry Richard trained as a cartographic draftsman as a civilian with the Royal Engineers and then travelled in North Africa and Asia for several years. He left the seismic contractor side of the industry in 1997 and is now Managing Director of Benchmark Geophysical Consulting Limited. Richard lives in the UK and is married with four children. He holds a Diploma in Health and Safety Management and has memberships of SEG, PESGB, IRCA and IOSH. He supports the IAGC and OGP by participating in several industry committees and is a founding member of IECO.*

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