

Hurricane aftermath, near-term planning dominate the year for offshore activities

OFFSHORE TECHNICAL and regulatory efforts over the past year were mostly dominated by one issue: hurricanes. That shouldn't be surprising, considering that a Department of Energy report released in late July indicated that hurricanes Katrina and Rita together caused the biggest disruption to operations that the industry has ever seen.



Alan Spackman

"It significantly impacted our members in the US Gulf of Mexico," said **Alan Spackman**, IADC director-offshore technical and regulatory affairs.

INTERIM GUIDANCE

Since 2005's devastating hurricanes, IADC has helped to develop 3 API documents providing interim guidance for Gulf of Mexico operations during the hurricane season.

In May, API published Recommended Practice 95F, interim recommendations for moored MODUs. IADC members participated in drafting the document, which addressed:

- Mooring design criteria (10-year return period based on data set including 2005 season and minimum 64 knot wind speed);
- Use of conservative "hot spot" in absence of site-specific metocean data;
- Site-specific risk ranking;
- Mooring system inspection;
- Installation verification;
- Storm preparedness and response;
- Location tracking systems; and
- Collection of data from rigs sustaining hurricane-force winds.

According to Mr Spackman, this project is still ongoing and will lead to additional research projects next year on issues such as mooring design.

In June, API published Recommended Practice 95J for jackup operations. The

recommendations were developed by a joint industry team under the leadership of **Bill Hedrick** of **Rowan Company**, with cooperation from the IADC Jackup Rig Committee.

The RP is intended to provide an interim approach for the 2006 hurricane season and will be withdrawn after the results of the ongoing studies can be considered and incorporated into the relevant standards for jackup site assessment.

RP 95J addresses:

- Need or timely site survey information and site-specific geotechnical and metocean data;
- Preloading processes;
- Evaluation of air gap (including recommended air gap and wave crest vs. water depth curves for use where site-specific information is not developed);
- Storm preparation and evacuation;
- Location tracking systems; and
- Collection of data from rigs sustaining hurricane-force winds.

Additionally, the Jackup Rig Committee continues to work on a Gulf of Mexico annex to the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (SNAME) guideline for jackup site assessments.

The third hurricane-guidance document IADC has helped to develop this year is API Bulletin 2TD, "Guidelines for Tie-downs on Offshore Production Facilities for Hurricane Season." Its purpose is to raise awareness of the need to evaluate the tie-downs used on offshore production facilities for drilling rigs, permanent equipment and facilities such as quarters and helidecks.

Both RPs 95J and 95F have led to 2 Notice to Lessees from the US Minerals Management Service to mandate use of these RPs for Gulf of Mexico operations during the 2006 hurricane season.

IMO MODU CODE

Another major project has been the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) MODU Code rewrite. An IADC workgroup worked on the rewrite over an 8-month period in 2005, and the initial draft was revised at an indus-

try/government workshop organized by IADC in October 2005. That revised draft was submitted to IMO's Ship Design & Equipment Subcommittee for review in February 2006.

Principal contributors included **Warren Weaver** of **GlobalSantaFe**, **Jim Gormanson** of **Noble Drilling Services** and **Peter Holst** of **Maersk Contractors**. Liberia, the Marshall Islands, Vanuatu also participated.

Among significant changes incorporated in the rewrite are:

- Technical means of access for inspection of hull structure;
- Incorporation of a life-saving systems code;
- Incorporation of a fire safety systems code.

Although IADC members had proposed the use of mandatory language in the MODU Code, the IMO subcommittee decided at its February 2006 meeting to continue to use only recommendatory language.

IADC members believe the lack of mandatory language has led to difficulty in distinguishing between provisions describing mandatory conditions for certification and provisions that are truly recommendatory in nature. The IADC workgroup will make another attempt to include mandatory language in the MODU Code at the IMO's March 2007 meeting, Mr Spackman said.

MARPOL ANNEX I

In response to concerns raised by IADC, the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee has revised its proposed MARPOL Annex I (Oil Pollution) regulations to lessen impact on semisubmersible MODU designs.

The Unified Interpretation establishes the damage conditions that must be considered when assessing stability under the MODU Code.

Rig design modifications will still be required after the regulations become effective, but if IADC had not intervened, double hull protection would have been required on the interior portions of columns and pontoons. ♠