

RIG WORKERS VOICE

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Eight killed in Helicopter Crash

Another helicopter has crashed into the North Sea while carrying rigs workers to shore. Out of the sixteen people on board, eight are confirmed dead and another eight unaccounted for.

This is the second helicopter crash this year that involves a Super Puma helicopter.

Less than 2 months ago, a Bond Super Puma crashed into the North Sea near a BP Platform. Fortunately on this occasion all 18 passengers were rescued.

The Super Puma is the same type of helicopter used to carry workers to and from work on the North West Shelf and Timor Sea in the Australian oil and gas industry. Indeed several of these helicopters have come from the North Sea.

The MUA-AWU Alliance has for some time been lobbying the Federal Government and NOPSA on concerns regarding the transport of workers by helicopter in the offshore oil and gas industry.

As part of submissions made to the NOPSA review in 2008, the Alliance raised concerns on:

- The lack of regularity clarity between CASA and NOPSA.
- The apparent high level of self regulation which has been allowed to develop in the industry.

The union and members believe consequences of the above lead to:

- An increased risk of a serious helicopter incident which could lead to serious injury and loss of life.
- Inconsistent standards apply across different operators. Given the economic costs that apply to higher standards and complacency that has arisen as a result the long periods without a major incident.
- A lack of understanding about the role of the safety case in relation to helicopter operations at, or in the airspace around offshore facilities.

Alliance members on facilities across the industry have reported numerous incidents where flights have been delayed and aborted because of mechanical problems that apply to helicopters.

The HART Aviation report to NOPSA found that there are a number of internationally accepted standards for helicopter operations that currently do not apply in Australia, and that industry self regulation, such as the safety case regime under NOPSA, has failed.

The MUA-AWU Alliance has submitted to the Federal Government that all recommendations made by HART Aviation in it's report to NOPSA should be implemented and that regulations should be developed that reflect internationally accepted best practice in helicopter operations.

Indeed this should occur before a serious tragedy occurs in the Australian industry.

The MUA-AWU Offshore Alliance is YOUR voice!!

For more information please contact Glen Williams (Darwin) - glen.williams@mua.org.au - 0401 271 740 or Rebecca Malysz (Perth) - rebecca@awuwa.asn.au - 0419 907 938