

KPI Information Update IU-71-2014
(Revised Guidance on the transfer of personnel by IMCA)

► **Introduction:**

One of the activities specific to offshore operations is the transfer of personnel between vessels and other offshore structures. Such transfers can include movements of personnel at crew change and shift change from vessel to vessel and also between vessels, offshore structures (including offshore wind turbines), barges and crew boats as well as to and from the quayside. Safety of transfer is of paramount importance.

► **The Guidance:**

The International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) has revised its 'Guidance on the transfer of personnel to and from offshore vessels and structures' (IMCA SEL 025 Rev. 1 / IMCA M 202 Rev. 1) to include the equipment and practices that are currently used in the offshore renewable energy industry.

The guidance is intended to provide guidance for the offshore industry on the safe transfer of personnel at sea. It covers risk assessment, training and competence, responsibility, equipment and communications, and focuses on the main methods of personnel transfer between vessels, offshore structures and the quayside.

The primary methods of personnel transfer covered are:

- Personnel transfer carrier;
- Gangways, bridge or accommodation ladders, including motion-compensated hydraulic gangways;
- Small boat or launch;
- Larger crew boat or support vessel;
- Mating 'surfer' structures allowing personnel to transfer safely.

For each case, the guidance covers the main safety issues and gives some information about the specialist equipment that may be involved, such as 'surfers', as well as special duties or responsibilities of personnel involved, particularly with regard to communications.

► **Personnel transfer Issues:**

For all personnel transfer operations, every operation should follow approved company procedures. These procedures should identify the necessary controls, i.e. permit to work, risk assessment and toolbox talks required. They should clearly identify weather and sea state limitations and also the roles and responsibilities of the personnel involved.



► **Vessel to Vessel Transfer:**

Vessel to vessel transfer should be planned to avoid transfer during the hours of darkness. If transfer of specific personnel becomes unavoidable at night, this should be dealt with in a specific and dedicated risk assessment and the operation only undertaken when it is considered safe to do so.

► **Briefing:**

Personnel being transferred should be briefed prior to the transfer and should be familiar with the method of transfer and the equipment being used.

Personnel involved in a transfer should be physically able to make the transfer, should understand the intended activity and should have agreed to the transfer method being proposed. Personnel being transferred should have valid offshore medicals, offshore survival training and be wearing the appropriate PPE such as, for example; an IMO approved inflatable life jacket fitted with light, whistle and PLB. In selecting the type of life jacket to be used the possibility of a fall from height should be taken into account. According to the on-location risk assessment, immersion suits suitable for avoiding cold water shock should be worn.

► **The Water Temperature:**

It is not possible to accurately establish at what water temperature cold water shock occurs to a person who unexpectedly enters the water. Some experts state that this can occur at a water temperature of below 10°C, others say it can happen when the water temperature is below 15°C. Clearly there is no consensus. As there are

a number of physiological factors that can influence cold water shock, it is difficult to define a set temperature. Thus it is recommended that an assessment of the risks associated with the work activity is undertaken, including, for example; sea state, current, weather, height of transfer, vessel type, fitness of person being transferred, estimated time to recover the person from the water, etc. to identify the correct PPE (thermal protection) required, to ensure the safety of the person, should they fall in the water.

► **The use of Personal Protective Equipment:**

Personnel joining or leaving a vessel or offshore structure at crew change may not be wearing appropriate PPE - such as safety boots, for example. A risk assessment, including these factors and consideration of the length of time individual personnel have been travelling and their tiredness, should be conducted prior to the transfer.

► **Medical Evacuation:**

In medical evacuation cases, specific risk assessments and methods would be required which should be covered under the location emergency plan. The plan should cover scenarios that are likely to be encountered.

► **Luggage/Equipment Transfer:**

All luggage/equipment should be transferred as a separate operation. Personnel should not carry luggage/equipment during the transfer. The exception to this could be when using a gangway/bridge system.