

## Contractors – ensuring “Big Picture” safety at the dock

By Shannon Smith

Dockside is often the busiest and most chaotic time on any vessel. Whether you are loading or unloading cargo, clearing customs, conducting repairs or in a shipyard, there is always pressure to get a huge amount of work done in a short amount of time.

We often don't have a lot of choices when hiring contractors in foreign ports due to country and local requirements. To complicate matters, contractors are not familiar with the vessel or our operations.

This is where your **gangway watch** becomes the first layer of your safety system that outsiders will encounter. An organized, prepared and professional watchman sets the tone for behavior expected of them.

If the vessel is in a shipyard or drydock, the Port Engineer will hold a contract Safety Meeting to orient the contractors to the TDI safety system and agree on any bridging procedures.

For example, if the general alarm is sounded, will you meet on the muster area of the vessel or on the dock? Make sure everyone knows where to meet. What if there is a medical emergency? Are local 911 services available? Who is responsible for calling them?

If alarms, comms or public address systems are the items being repaired, what alternate methods of communication are in place?

If the vessel is at regular dockside, independent contractors may come on board for just a few hours to complete repairs. In those cases, “The Chief Engineer will supervise and evaluate the work of the independent contractor and ensure that he follows TDI-Brooks safety system procedures.” SOP-GEN-2015D Sec 3.4

In the following incident, failures to communicate a simple repair and agree on a back up plan cost several lives. What's your plan?



**Daily communication  
is critical**

“**The First Mate, as the HSE Officer aboard, is responsible for ensuring that all employees, visitors and contractors follow the TDI safety policies and procedures and any variations ...”**

**SOP-GEN-2015D  
Sec 2.0**

**TOP 3 Safety Card Hits**  
(Fleetwide last month)

**Housekeeping 13**

**PPE 9**

**Tools & Equipment 5**

**Safety Attitude 5**

## Unheeded alarm costs lives

These observations come from a USCG report on a blowout which killed eight individuals: numerous false alarms were set off about one week before the blowout.

Knowing that repairs were being made to the system, some personnel on the platform became conditioned to ignore the alarm.

Other personnel were unaware of problems with the alarms. "The alarm to abandon the rig was verbally passed to everyone in the living quarters. It is unfortunate that a number of individuals (seven) did not immediately respond to it.

All of the seven men who were last seen alive in the living quarters . . . were in various stages of dressing or collecting personal belongings when the explosion destroyed the living quarters.

Had they immediately heeded the verbal alarm to evacuate they would probably have survived the incident. Other individuals who evacuated immediately did survive.

One of the individuals killed was last seen on the side of his bunk in the process of putting on his shoes. Two others were last seen in their rooms carrying on a conversation.

The last words of another victim who was last seen in the shower were, "They're always wanting us to do something on our time off."

## Lessons Learned

***Failure to communicate to affected personnel:*** Only some personnel aboard the platform were aware that the alarms were in the process of being repaired and would sound false alarms. Others were not informed of the alarm problems or repairs.

***No alternate alarm created:*** During the repairs, no alternate alarm was agreed upon or communicated to the personnel aboard. When a real emergency occurred, the people aware of the repairs had no way of knowing that the verbal alarm passed from person to person was real.

***Failure to take simple precautions are frequently significant contributing factors to injuries and deaths.***