



# **Notifying Emergency Contacts/ Next of Kin of Offshore Personnel**

## **A Guidance Document for the Offshore Energy Industry**

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## **Introduction**

This document provides guidance to companies on procedures for notifying emergency contacts/next of kin following an incident offshore. The term 'incident' is used generically and does not necessarily relate to those issues identified as major emergencies; it applies equally to issues such as sudden illness or acute medical conditions.

This document may be useful to those responsible for preparing emergency response plans and organising / training emergency response teams.

It covers the following:

1. Emergency contact & next of kin information
2. Confirmation of information during an incident
3. Initial Notifications
4. Messages of Involvement
5. Guidance Review

This guidance applies only to offshore energy installations and associated activity, such as helicopter movements, where policing responsibility lies with Police Scotland. These installations are in the northern and central North Sea and west of Shetland in Scottish Waters of the UK Continental Shelf.

For incidents occurring out with these areas, companies should liaise with the appropriate Police Area.

## 1. Emergency Contact & Next of Kin information

It is important that companies keep information about emergency contacts and next of kin up to date.

Companies should also have processes in place always to be able to access this information at short notice.

Many oil and gas companies operating in the UK Continental Shelf use the Vantage system, but other personnel tracking systems are in use.

The data held on personnel tracking systems will be used as a source of information during the response to incidents.

It should be noted that in cases where the Emergency Contact and Next of Kin information are different, it is the Emergency Contact to whom the initial notification should be passed, as this person has been specifically designated to receive such news.

## 2. Confirmation of information during an incident

The process for management of any incident will vary depending upon the seriousness of the incident and upon the status on the impacted individual(s).

Medical evacuations for minor complaints are a routine operational matter for oil and gas companies and are dealt with as part of core 'day business'.

For more serious issues, company onshore emergency response teams are likely to be mobilised to support and coordinate the response. When notified of such incidents, the Police Service with jurisdiction may mobilise Incident Liaison Officers (ILO) to join company onshore emergency response teams as required.

There is a requirement for the OIM to communicate and confirm the identities of those involved/affected. ***It is imperative that this information is verified, and passed, accurately to their appropriate onshore focal point. It should consist of the persons' name, unique identification number where present, date of birth and status to*** provide suitable confirmation with regards to identification.

A specific form has been developed by the EPOL Group to report that an individual is missing or displaying no vital signs of life. The OIM (and Medic, in the case of an apparent death) should complete this form and submit it to the relevant local Police Service and company onshore emergency response room.

In the event of a Coastguard Paramedic formally declaring the death of a person on an asset, the Verification of Death (VOD) Form will be left with the OIM. A copy of this form should also be submitted to the relevant local Police Service and to the onshore emergency response room. More information on processes in the event of a death occurring offshore is provided in Section 3 below.

### **3. Initial Notifications**

As with overall management of any incident, the process for notification to the emergency contact will also vary depending upon the seriousness of the incident and upon the status of the impacted individuals.

#### **Illness or Injury**

In the event of an individual suffering minor illness or injury, it is the responsibility of their employer to notify the emergency contact, if the affected individual has been unable to do so themselves.

The company coordinating the onshore response should task contracting companies as necessary. If contracting companies cannot be contacted the company coordinating should make best endeavour to contact the appropriate individuals. There is no role for the Police in the notification processes under such circumstances.

#### **Life threatening Injury**

In the event of a potentially life-threatening injury being confirmed immediately, discussion will take place with the Police and it will be agreed whether the Police will take on the responsibility for making the notification. The outcome of this dialogue and agreement should be recorded within the company emergency response system.

The nationality of the individual and/or location of the emergency contact does not impact this process. The relevant Police Service can task other Police Services worldwide via Interpol, liaise with national embassies or make direct contact with the emergency contact via telephone as required.

When life-threatening injury cannot be confirmed immediately, it is the responsibility of the relevant employer to pass an initial 'proactive' notification and the subsequent follow-up will either be for employer or Police, depending upon the nature of the injuries.

In these circumstances, the Police Service with jurisdiction does not need to be involved in the development of the wording of this initial 'heads up' notification or its delivery. The company coordinating the onshore response should task relevant contractors to make notifications on behalf of their own employees. If contracting companies cannot be contacted the company coordinating should make best endeavour to contact the appropriate individuals.

In effect, the information contained within the notification should be the level typically contained in a company holding statement along with confirmation that the individual has been involved and that further, confirmed information will be provided as soon as possible.

It is appreciated that receipt of such a message will be distressing and that the lack of detailed information may cause frustration. It is prudent for each affected company to identify a single point of contact for relevant next of kin as soon as possible, to provide

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family liaison support as appropriate. The timing of involvement of company family liaison will require to be discussed with the relevant Police Service.

It is important that the emergency contact is made aware of the relevant individual's involvement in an incident as early as possible. This is particularly relevant given the speed of modern-day communications and widespread use of social media.

Where there is potential for life-threatening injuries, and once the initial 'heads up' notification has been passed, Companies are strongly encouraged to contact the Police as a priority to discuss next steps.

### **Death and/or Missing Persons**

Within the UK Continental Shelf, any workplace fatality or missing person will be the subject of a Police enquiry and the Police Service with jurisdiction will therefore also take responsibility for informing the relevant emergency contact/next of kin.

The role of the relevant employer under such circumstances is to support the affected emergency contact/next of kin and to provide the Police with any personal information that may be required.

When Police are making a notification, it is best practice to provide contact details of the company family liaison support so the emergency contact/next of kin can be advised. The Police will not delay making any notification in the absence of family liaison support being identified.

## 4. Messages of Involvement

A Message of Involvement is the initial notification to the emergency contact of someone being involved in an incident offshore. A Message of Involvement is applicable during the response to the most serious incidents, where the locations and conditions of potentially large numbers of individuals are not known and where confirmation cannot be immediately obtained. (An example of such an incident would be a helicopter ditch or the complete abandonment of a platform by any and all means, including direct entry into water).

It is a common message to be passed pro-actively to all relevant emergency contacts in an effort to ensure consistency and it will not include any specific information regarding whether the affected individual is injured, missing or apparently deceased.

It is the responsibility of the relevant employer to pass the message and the Police Service with jurisdiction does not need to be involved in the development of the wording of the message or its delivery. The company coordinating the onshore response should task contractors as necessary.

*Example: “(Identify yourself) I am a representative of (company name) and have some important news for you. Can I confirm that you are the emergency contact/Next of kin of (name) and that this is the best number to call you back on.....*

*.....a short time ago there was a report of an incident with a helicopter inbound to ??? from the ??? Platform. I have been asked to inform you that your (relationship & name) was onboard the helicopter and is therefore involved in this incident offshore”.*

Allow the family to take in the information and be prepared to deal with any questions.

Again, it is prudent for each affected company to identify a single point of contact for relevant emergency contact as soon as possible, to provide family liaison support as appropriate.

Delivery of a Message of Involvement does not change any of the procedures mentioned above in respect of follow-up notifications should individuals subsequently die, or injuries subsequently be confirmed as life threatening.

## 5. Guidance Review

The guidance will be reviewed and updated periodically to take into account learning from exercises and incidents.