



Motions 2016-2020

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IndustriAll European Trade Union's **Motion 2016-2020**

As adopted by the 2nd industriAll Europe Congress on 8th June 2016

Offshore Oil Workers – Unacceptable Helicopter Risks

Over the last four decades, many hundreds of offshore workers have lost their lives in the offshore oil, gas and petroleum industry.

A whole range of tragic accidents have taken place over this period, including the Piper Alpha tragedy with 167 oil workers killed and the Alexander Kielland tragedy with 123 oil workers killed.

Although there has been better regulation, better technology and an improved safety culture in recent times, the greatest threat now to the safety of offshore and onshore workers is the helicopter transport provided.

New helicopters, better survival suits and helicopter underwater egress training have not made this mode of transport totally safe as yet.

In August 2013, a helicopter with sixteen passengers and two crew on board crashed into the sea at Sumburgh, Scotland. Four of the passengers died.

In April 2009, 16 people died when a helicopter returning from BP's Miller platform crashed outside Peterhead, Scotland. Pilot error and gearbox failure were given as the reasons for these crashes.

In October 2012, a helicopter ditched while ferrying workers from Aberdeen to West Phoenix drilling rig 86 miles out to sea, off Shetland. All were rescued.

In May 2012, all 14 passengers and crew members on a helicopter were rescued after it ditched 30 miles off the coast of Aberdeen on a journey to the Maersk Resilient platform.

The latest tragedy was in Bergen, Norway, on 29th April 2016, when 13 people were killed when a helicopter 'broke up' in mid-air. Investigations are just beginning on this last tragedy.

The pain and anguish of the families of the bereaved and injured has been all too plain to see. Their loved ones were travelling or returning from their work and expected to travel safely.

Public and private enquiries into these tragedies and accidents sometimes take years to conclude, causing further pain and anguish - and lessons are still not being learned.

The drop in oil prices has aggravated the situation and put thousands of workers out of work. The oil industry has gone to tremendous lengths to cut costs. The cost cutting has also had a negative effect on safety in the whole industry and especially on the safety culture. The safety culture takes many years to create and just a short time to destroy. We see erosion of safety culture as the gravest threat to the health and safety of our offshore members and their loved ones. This erosion has to be combatted on all levels.

Unions with members working offshore call on industriAll Europe to take up the issue of health and safety which is of paramount concern to its members who are working offshore and their families, particularly in these times of lower oil prices. In addition, helicopter safety must be addressed by all relevant EU Authorities, and in doing so, involve the industriAll Europe Working Group on Offshore Safety and to support unions who are campaigning for better offshore safety, such as Unite's 'Safe Back Home' campaign.