

Lifting Forum: LOLER survey results



In Q4 of 2019 a simple LOLER survey of 10 questions was sent out to member companies. Returns came from 28 different role types over 17 different companies, 31 assets made up of 4 different asset types; fixed platforms, FPSOs, drilling rigs and terminals.

Respondents included: roughnecks, bosuns, deck ops and foremen, lifting supervisors, crane operators, riggers, TAs, mech techs, STLs, LOLER Focal Points, OIMS/Masters and lift planners.

Safety concerns raised included: introducing hazards through the use of hands-free equipment, onshore loading standards, deck crew turn-over, competence and refresher training, non-operational fixed cranes and lift plan quality and compliance.

Equipment issues included: radio coms, existing equipment de-rating, new equipment being damaged/faulty, fixed crane maintenance, structural steelwork – assessment of lifting capacity, access issues for lifting beams and points.

There was a number of respondents who were keen to share good practice in equipment including: air skates, stair-climbing trollies, ultra-low headroom trolley hoists and adjustable double-sided beam clamps for use in tight spaces. Marine risers – riser yoke attachment for crane, tubulars – magnetic tube lifters, magnetic pad eyes – small lifts, tight spaces, wireless load shackles – for loads of unknown weight, lifeboats – vertical gas bottle carriers.

Hands free lifting was a key topic of discussing with the majority of assets having a hands-free policy and using hands-free methods with some variation on when they should/should not be applied. Interestingly some sites risk assessed a lifting job and used hands-free tools as a mitigating factor, where others risk assessed the use of the hand-free tools themselves.

Several responses acknowledged that use of hands-free techniques can introduce their own hazards that need to be taken into account. There was also some variation on criteria for when lifting should be hands-free with hands-free being impractical or difficult in some scenarios. Pros included: prevent trapping/crushing and allowing distance from operations. Cons included tools snapping, tools slipping, tools becoming entangled or drawing in user to unsafe zones.

The survey asked if there was suitable acknowledgement of the criticality of lifting operations by the management team on their installations. Overwhelmingly replies were positive with occasional respondents feeling pressure during certain times e.g. marginal weather conditions, shutdowns but majority acknowledge that they are encouraged to stop the job.

They were also asked if they have effective onshore support for rigging, hoisting and lifting matters and if they know who their onshore contacts are. Again, overwhelmingly positive responses to this question.

Multiskilling of workforce was considered, asking 'Is there multi-skilling of other trades to allow them to assist with portable rigging operations on your installation?' and 'Is this a good or bad thing?'

This prompted mixed views on whether a good or bad thing. One interesting comment was that qualified riggers are not given the same professional respect as other technical roles, e.g. electricians.

Another mentioned that other trades are upskilled e.g. Rigger Stage 1 to enable simple lifts. (The issue of the Rigger Stage 1 Certificate indicates that the delegate has achieved the minimum level of training as defined by oil and gas employers and approved by OPITO; it does not imply competence in the Rigger role)

While another recognised that multi-skilling means more competent LOLER appointed personnel may be required to be accessible to provide advice.

When asked what else would help to make lifting and hoisting operations offshore safer the core theme seemed to be around ensuring riggers are competent.

One question raised was about lifting carried out by rope access technicians and the lifting they do under IRATA guidance (although carried out under IRATA guidance, all lifting operations carried out at work with the use of work equipment fall under the remit of LOLER)

Lift plans, risk assessments and toolbox talks need to be compatible with Control of Work systems, which is not always the case (recommend these companies integrate the SCiS safe working essentials into their current processes and systems).

Step Change in Safety's Lifting and Mechanical Handline Guidelines are aimed at anyone involved in lifting and mechanical handling operations, particularly those who risk assess and plan these operations, and the supervisors of the personnel performing them.

The guidelines give guidance on lift planning and risk assessment and identify the correct person for each stage of the operation.