

## TRAINERS CORNER

## Travelers Insurance gets proactive with well control training

By Linda Hsieh, associate editor

HE'S SEEN IT happen countless times. During his 20 years with **The Red Adair Company** and seven years with **Boots & Coots**, renowned firefighter and well control expert **Brian Krause** noticed over and over again how unprepared many oil companies and drilling contractors were for well blowouts.

Many carried the attitude of "It won't happen to me" or "I'll just let the specialty companies deal with it," said Mr Krause, who's now vice president and global practice leader for **Travelers Insurance's** oil & gas division. "Many small companies and even some mid-size companies were totally overwhelmed. They have to start making decisions within seconds that will impact the stability of their company."

Travelers looked into the statistics and found that there was an approximately 30% cost difference between well control for an unprepared client vs. one with an emergency response plan. So the company formed the Well Control Prevention and Preparation Training Class for Travelers' policy-holders. The aim is to educate their clients on the importance of having a contingency plan, Mr Krause said, and Travelers benefits by having fewer claims.

### SEEING THE SIGNS

On the more technical side of the class, instructors teach students how to identify drilling kicks and what immediate steps should be taken. Wells rarely blow out without signs — there's usually a series of seven to 10 occurrences preceding the actual blowout, Mr Krause said. "The well is telling you something, and by paying attention to the wellbore and what you do, you can make it better or worse," he said.

Equipment maintenance is also emphasized, identifying for the students and familiarizing them with critical equipment such as accumulators, choke kill systems and BOPs.

Because students taking the class range from CEOs to drilling managers, Travelers tailors each class to different areas of operation. For administrative employees, Travelers teaches them how to deal with state agencies, plan an evacuation and communicate with the mass media.

The course's most important lesson, Mr Krause said, is understanding the importance of calling Travelers at the first detection of a problem. "Most times we're able to activate the proper procedures and keep the event from occurring," he said.

The challenge, however, is getting them to call. Some drilling contractors may feel pressured not to call out of concern that they would be revealing a "weakness" or "fault." "I try to help them get into the mindset that it's OK to call. My services are free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," he added.

The training course is currently 6 hours, but for their drilling contractor clients, Travelers encourages them to take the 2½-day course — because "these are the people who have their hands on the brakes and the choke." This newly offered course is taught jointly with **Wild Well Control**, and participants



**Travelers Insurance's Well Control Prevention and Preparation Training Class teaches students the importance of a contingency plan as well as how to recognize the signs of a drilling kick. Students are seen here in the simulator room during a training class.**

receive an IADC WellCAP certificate upon completion. For both the 6-hour and 2½-day courses, Travelers picks up the cost for their policy-holders.

In addition to these classes, Travelers offers on-site rig awareness training to teach well control issues. One thing they emphasize while out on the rig is that every person has a responsibility. On drilling crews, many employees are responsible for just one job; under well control, everyone has input. Travelers trains every crew member how to recognize the indicators of a well control incident and emphasizes that every employee must be involved to prevent a blowout.

One growing problem Mr Krause said he's seeing on US rigs is language barriers. Pure Spanish-speaking crews are increasingly common, and in the Rocky Mountain region, he's even seeing Chinese drilling crews. The solution, he said, is to identify the barrier beforehand. "Make sure you know how to communicate a problem and the crew understands the procedure."

Another training tool Travelers offers for its clients is a full emergency response plan, an itemized, step-by-step checklist of actions to take in the first hour, first day or first week.

"Our key is to be proactive," Mr Krause said. "No other insurance company does this, and our challenge is to make clients realize they can go to their insurance company to solve problems, not just to clean up the mess afterwards and get the check. It's a new way of thinking." ♠