DRED MARINE RIGS CAN EASILY BE LOST IN THE MIX.

10,000 VESSELS, THE DRILLING INDUSTRY’S FLEET OF A FEW HUNDRED MARINE RIGS, AND PERMANENT PLANTS AND FACILITIES, REPRESENTS A RELATIVELY MODEST SEGMENT OF THE OVERALL ECONOMY. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN REGULATORS TURN TO THE TASK OF RULEMAKING FOR OFFSHORE VESSELS, AN ARMADA COMPRISING MORE THAN 10,000 VESSELS, THE DRILLING INDUSTRY’S FLEET OF A FEW HUNDRED MARINE RIGS CAN EASILY BE LOST IN THE MIX.

Lacking alert intervention, regulations targeting concerns at best irrelevant to, and at worst harmful to the drilling industry can steamroller an industry of our size—not necessarily out of malice, but through ignorance or bureaucratic oversight.

These observations came again into focus for me recently. The catalyst was the recent announcement that virtually all seagoing vessels must soon be fitted with numerous items of navigation safety equipment—all but most MODUs, that is. IADC’s intervention on this issue produced an exemption that will save owners and operators of non-self-propelled offshore rigs from spending hundreds of thousands of dollars per rig for what amounts to superfluous equipment. After all, navigation equipment on a rig that doesn’t move under its own power is rather unnecessary!

IADC’s long battle to keep land drilling rigs exempt from US air-emission rules intended to target fixed facilities, such as factories, is another case in point. Compared to the plethora of manufacturing facilities, power plants and factories, the US land-rig fleet is small indeed. Yet, despite the stark differences between inherently migratory drilling rigs, and permanent plants and facilities, regulators would likely have applied a one-size-fits-all emissions prescription to both, had it not been for IADC intervention and hard work. The result would have been a mountain of paperwork for contractors on virtually every rig move.

This issue, however, has resurfaced: EPA has announced plans to issue emissions rules for non-road diesel engines. That category, in which IADC successfully argued that land rigs belong, has until now been largely exempt from Clean Air Act provisions.

You can learn more about IADC’s efforts to fend off the stampede at our upcoming IADC Annual Meeting (25-27 September) in San Antonio. I hope to see you there.