

# EDITORIALS

From the Chairman

## SAFETY: BELIEVE TO ACHIEVE

**AS 2004 CHAIRMAN** of IADC, I am pleased to announce that IADC has just released its accident statistics for 2003, and that not a single lost-time incident occurred during the entire year. Not one fatality. Not even a recordable. We have finally achieved an injury-free workplace.

Isn't that a great message? Well, one day an IADC chairman will write such an editorial, and it will be a fact.

But today's not the day. It hasn't happened.

The drilling industry has made momentous progress in slashing incidents and injuries. Just in the last decade, the drilling industry has reduced incident frequencies by nearly



Marion M. Woolie, Chairman

two-thirds. And we've come even further since I began in this business in the 1970s.

Our industry has worked hard to achieve these results. We've developed training programs, such as IADC RigPass and WellCAP; held conferences like our upcoming IADC Lifting and Mechanical Handling Conference (20-21 April, Amsterdam) and our Annual HSE & Training Conference in

Houston; published handbooks and safety checklists. We've made safety a priority from the monkeyboard to the board room.

But try telling that to someone who just lost a loved one in an industrial accident.

Our goal must be an injury-free workplace. The organizers of our 2003 IADC European Health, Safety & Environment Conference had it right, I think, in developing the theme for that event last October: "A Future without Harm: Building the Culture of HSE Excellence".

Not long ago, many in our industry did not believe an injury-free workplace was achievable. "It happens, that's why we call them accidents" was the operative phrase.

Today, belief that this goal is within our grasp is pervasive among contractors and operators. And we must believe it if our goal is to become a reality—no belief, no reality.

It's up to us to change our old-school behaviors and habits toward safety in the work place. We must become intolerant of shortcuts, not following procedures, and every class of incident and personal injury. The reason we still hurt people in our workplace is, frankly, because management tolerates it. If we were as intolerant of unsafe practices as we are of, say, drugs at the rigsite, we would become an injury-free industry.

Let's take the belief that we can work injury free to heart. That's the first big step on the way to sending all of our people home to their families and loved ones as fit and healthy as they entrust them to us. We must believe to achieve. ■

March/April 2004

From the President

## TAIL FEATHERS

**I AM NOT** Don Quixote and I have no intention of tilting at windmills. However, there is something about the folks who stridently promote wind powered energy that rankles. It's their willingness to blithely ignore environmental issues in wind turbines that they continually press as being problems with oil and gas drilling. Take "visual pollution". I've already commented on that: miles of permanently installed turbines chained to the coast line vs. a single, mobile drilling unit. Enough said.

Now come the birds, again.

In the North Sea, new operating rules are being set for flaring. Basically, there will be no flaring at night during the months of October and November, prime migratory bird travel time. If, during other periods, the on-board

"bird watcher" registers 50 bird deaths from flying through the flame, operations will be suspended. I guess this is as good a standard as any for protection of migratory fowl from oil and gas operations. (Though, I will forego a Darwinian argument about how deletion of the flame flyers improves the genetic strength of the flock).

Back to wind turbines. Approximately 7,000 wind towers sit in the Altamonte Pass, just outside San Francisco, churning and whirling away to produce a lot less electricity than one good offshore gas strike. In two decades of operation, these wind turbines have killed more than 22,000 birds, including many protected species, with their spinning blades. A spokesman for the Center for Biological Diversity has described the bird kill from the Altamonte Pass wind farm as being the "equivalent of a terrestrial Exxon Valdez *every year*". Understandably, there are wildlife protection groups now protesting new wind farms.

What is interesting are the self-justifying defenses put forth by wind energy advocates, trying to minimize the impact of bird kill. One report contends that more birds die each year in the United States by automobile collision (60 million), office or household window panes (98 million) and communication towers (4 million) than with wind turbines (10,000 to 40,000). My favorite is the claim that the common household cat takes out more birds each year than wind turbines.

The oil and gas industry can take some pride in being more proactive in addressing the problem of bird kill. Fifty roasted flyers is a much more stringent standard than the scores of innocent fowl taken down each year by the whirling blades of a single wind turbine. One other thing: we have no record of any "rig cats" being kept offshore. Landing on rigs can (and does, according to reports) provide a decent overnight roosting spot for numerous fowl during migration. The only hazard reported is the danger to rig crews from skids and falls on the slippery stuff these feathery visitors leave on the decks when they depart at daylight. Here, kitty, kitty!! ■



Lee Hunt, President