

Operators differ in hiring a well control company

CUDD WELL CONTROL has noted a difference in the way operators approach hiring a well control company, especially when a well control event has already occurred. Its affiliate company, **Well Control School (WCS)**, is offering a web-based course of the company's popular System 21 program.

FIRST RESPONDER

Cudd Well Control provides services typically found in well control companies such as assuring that the correct equipment is available, drilling plan reviews and rig inspections. When bringing equipment to a wellsite, its first determination is how much equipment is necessary, which is determined partly by the well's location. It's considerably more difficult and time-consuming to travel 200 miles in Colombia, for example, than it is in the US. Downsizing but increasing the number of equipment loads can reduce the time necessary to arrive at a wellsite.

Tyson Foutz, Well Control Engineer for Cudd, noted a difference in operator philosophy in a well control situation. Some operators talk with several well control companies about the various operations required to kill a well and the cost involved.

"Their first concern is still containment of the well," Mr Foutz explained, "but they have time to shop around. That's part of what makes this business different that it was 20 years ago."

A lot of operators, including national oil companies, are procuring their own rapid response packages that will enable them to get water flowing to the well and secure equipment so the situation doesn't deteriorate while waiting for the well control company, according to Mr Foutz.

Still, many of the larger operators will make arrangements with a particular well control company following a tender for services. That could result in master service agreements for well control events, Mr Foutz noted, or it could be on a case-by-case basis.

Like other well control companies, Cudd provides drilling plan and well plan reviews, performs kick evaluations and

makes recommendations regarding casing size, shoe depth, etc. The company also performs rig inspections, which many times is insurance driven, Mr Foutz said.



Cudd Well Control provides realistic first responder training at its Elk City facility.

"Sometimes the insurance company will suggest that a particular rig be inspected before it begins drilling the well," he explained, "and we will inspect the well control equipment, the pits, choke manifold, etc."

He said Cudd will also run kick drills on the rig to see how well the crew responds to certain situations, whether "their training took root and if they have been practicing."

The company also evaluates the operator's and contractor's blowout contingency plans, including incident command structure and additional services such as plume modeling to determine prevailing winds if they are drilling near a populated area.

While WCS provides most of the training, Cudd Well Control also offers a week-long first responder course at its Elk City, Okla training facility. The facility includes a test well connected to a propane source that simulates a blowout and fire, providing a realistic well control event that its students prepare to "kill".

"The course teaches what the first responders at a well control situation can and should do before a well control company arrives," Mr Foutz said. "In some cases it may take several days for

a professional well control team to arrive, so we show them how to set up monitors and begin spraying water until the team does arrive."

While a first responder course typically covers the basics in a week, Cudd can also tailor the course to the customer's requirements.

WELL CONTROL SCHOOL

Well Control School (WCS) is developing several proactive programs to include different aspects of training other than well control, such as pipeliner and terrorism training. Pipeliner training and assessment is a new initiative for WCS to meet the demands of the US Department of Transportation (DOT) for pipeline operators and required qualifications, according to **Dennise Sauvage**, Marketing Director for WCS.

As for terrorism training, the US government and the oil and gas industry are examining potential courses on combating terrorism specific to the oil field. The government is offering grant money to help develop a curriculum, according to Ms Sauvage, if they meet basic requirements such as addressing pipeline, production and perimeter control, among other topics. The terrorism training will pertain to onshore and offshore structures.

"The government is in the process now of building and identifying the core topics and skills they want for the curriculum," Ms Sauvage said. "It will probably be 6-8 months before we are able to begin establishing a curriculum, but in the meantime they are working with the industry to help identify the topics and skills."

INTERNET TRAINING

The company is not neglecting its well control training. It increased the amount of safety and orientation programs at the request of numerous companies who are also interested in bringing the training to the engineering level, many of whom rarely or never venture into the field.

WCS has been working on a web-based version of its System 21 interactive computer-based well control training pro-