



Submission of the

Oil and Gas Sector

New Zealand Engineering, Printing and
Manufacturing Union

to the

Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health
and Safety

**Strategic Review of the Workplace Health and Safety
System**

P O Box 3705
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INTRODUCTION

This submission is made on behalf of the Oil and Gas Sector of the New Zealand Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU). The EPMU is the largest private sector union covering 35,000 members throughout New Zealand and these members work in a multitude of industries including aviation, metals manufacturing, primary metals, plastics, timber, postal and logistics, energy and mining, electro-communications, print and media, and public sector and infrastructure.

The Oil and Gas Sector covers on-shore and off-shore oil and gas exploration, extraction, refining and production. It forms part of our Energy and Mining Sector and this wider sector covers nearly 5% of our membership.

The Oil and Gas Sector has a strong focus on Health and Safety as it is a very high risk sector, especially on the rigs and we want to acknowledge that we fully support the EPMU's broader submission to this Task Force.

We are part of a Trans-Tasman Oil and Gas Alliance that consists of the Maritime Union of New Zealand, the Maritime Union of Australia and the Australian Workers Union. Both as part of this Alliance and singularly as the EPMU we worked closely with the Health and Safety Policy Unit on the Health and Safety in Employment (Petroleum Exploration and Extraction) Regulations 1999 Review, including numerous meetings and submissions. It is this experience that we wish to share with the Task Force. Therefore, this submission will focus solely on Questions 11, 12, 17 and 18 from the Safer Workplaces Consultation Document.

The Oil and Gas Sector of the EPMU welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Task Force on these specific recommendations put forward to the Health and Safety review and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these further with the Taskforce should the opportunity arise.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

To what extent do directors and other senior leaders provide effective leadership and governance of workplace health and safety?

Through our involvement with the Oil and Gas Sector it has become very obvious that it is essential for the Directors and Senior Employees at workplaces to be the leaders in Health and Safety. Messages and behaviour coming down from the top must emphasise/reiterate that the well-being of all employees and the importance of workplace health and safety is a core business practice – it is not about being a hindrance to production or merely a compliance cost.

As we have learnt from the Pike River disaster when Directors and Senior Leadership prioritise production over safety, it is a recipe for disaster. In the Oil and Gas Sector, like in the Mining Sector, this attitude often leads to multiple fatalities. The Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 is a tragic example of this. We have to move away from the "No 8 Wire" mentality as this is not appropriate on a worksite. Health and Safety

must be paramount and must be fully supported from the boards, owners/shareholders, and the senior leadership at all workplaces.

What improvements can be made to directors' and other leaders' participation in workplace health and safety, so as to get better workplace health and safety outcomes?

As was stated in the EPMU's full submission, duty holders need to be made personally accountable for any breach that leads to serious injuries. Directors should also be made accountable. Without this accountability, pressure from shareholders/owners to improve profitability will see a repeat of Pike River where production will be at the expense of worker safety and dangerous shortcuts will be taken.

INCENTIVES

How successful are government, industry, corporate or other potentially influential bodies in influencing health and safety outcomes beyond their own workplaces (for example through influencing their suppliers, counterparts, and competitors)?

Following the Deepwater Horizon disaster it became obvious that much tougher regulations were needed in New Zealand if we were to avoid similar mistakes occurring here. The Energy and Communications Branch of the Ministry of Economic Development instigated a Review on the Offshore Petroleum Health, Safety and Environmental Legislation. The EPMU was one of many contributors. As a result of this review a tripartite group was formed to look specifically at Health and Safety in this industry. The group consisted of staff from the Ministry, and representatives from the EPMU, MUNZ and the relevant industry group, PEPANZ (Petroleum Exploration and Production Association of New Zealand).

This group worked together constructively over a number of months and prepared a draft document that went to the Government. After changes were made to the document the Health and Safety in Employment (Petroleum Exploration and Extraction) Regulations 1999 Review) was released with a request for submissions.

PEPANZ, MUNZ, EPMU and the Trans-Tasman Oil and Gas Alliance all put in submissions that were broadly similar, after discussions were held between the groups as to what was required. Due to this joint approach to submissions, the document incorporated the recommendations within the submissions and that same group has now been charged with developing the Approved Code of Practice for Health and Safety Representatives within this sector.

This joint approach from industry groups and key stakeholders will have far reaching impacts on the health and safety for workers on their worksites whether they are offshore or onshore.

What could be done to get government, industry, corporate or other potentially influential bodies to exert greater influence on improving workplace health and safety outcomes beyond their own workplaces?

We believe that the approach discussed above is one that should be used across all industries. Tripartite meetings between Government, Unions and Industry is the way to ensure that health and safety outcomes are improved across many worksites and can give both workers and employer the confidence to know that all worksites have to meet the same criteria so the health and safety of workers can be seen as part of the core business and not as a compliance cost that is to be avoided if at all possible.

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