Report on the identification of hazards related to the weight, size, and shape of offshore oil and gas workers in the UK

Report

December 2023

Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definitions
BPO	Big Person(s) Offshore
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
HAZID	Hazard Identification Workshop
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
LSA	Life Saving Apparatus
O&GUK	Oil & Gas UK
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacture
OEUK	Offshore Energies UK
PFEER	Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response Regulations
SOLAS	Safety of Life at Sea
TFG	Task Finish Group
XBR	Extra Broad
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
GRP	Glass Reinforced Plastic
SECE	Safety and Environmentally Critical Element
TEMPSC	Totally Enclosed Motor Propelled Survival Craft
EERV	Emergency Response and Rescue
NUI	Normally Unattended Installation
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
ERT	Emergency Response Team
EBS	Emergency Breathing System
SWL	Safe Working Load

1 Executive Summary

The weight, size and shape of offshore workers has been identified as a concern following incidents and issues over the past few decades. Industry has taken action on several occasions, including recertification of lifeboats and the introduction of an extra broad (XBR) category for helicopter passengers. The weight size, shape and of the offshore workforce was last analysed in depth in 2013. Early in 2023 installation duty holders and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) raised concerns that the normal offshore population could exceed lifeboat loading capacity and further concerns about the capacity of lifesaving equipment. Dutyholders were managing the risks, however a common approach was not in place. In the summer of 2023 Offshore Energies UK (OEUK) obtained population data related to the weights of offshore travellers and, after analysis, hosted a hazard identification workshop (HAZID) upon which this report is based.

OEUK have, following analysis of the HAZID findings, identified action parties for each hazard and will track the actions through to conclusion for medium and long-term work, some of which will be complex and challenging. Installation dutyholders should consider reviewing their risk assessment conducted under Regulation 5 of the Offshore Installations (Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995 and record appropriately to ensure that they can demonstrate appropriate actions that are suitable for all persons within their offshore population considering their weight, shape, and size.

2 Introduction

There has been a steady increase in weight, size, and shape and of Western populations. There has been extensive research on this topic which this report does not seek to examine. Since at least the 1970s SOLAS Rules based on global populations identified an average population weight of 75kg, this was increased to 82.5kg in 2010 for new vessels. Installations and lifeboats prior to 2010 are may have been designed for the lower figure and that lifesaving equipment may remain in use today.

In 2005, OEUK (then Oil and Gas UK), industry, and regulators reviewed the population of UK offshore oil and gas workers. The studies included work by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) which identified an average weight of 84kg which was adjusted using statistical methods to 98kg for design review purposes. In 2008, the UK HSE issued Offshore Information Sheet No. 12/2008 'Big Persons in Lifeboats' that resulted in de-rating of some lifeboats, and replacement of some boats and davits, to ensure that the offshore population could be safety accommodated.

In 2013, because of concerns related to helicopter accidents the risk of large people escaping from helicopter windows was highlighted, industry formed a Joint Industry Project which examined the size and shape of offshore workers, this identified that the bi-deltoid measurement was a limiting factor for helicopter escape. Since then, the XBR has been used to ensure that those with a bi-deltoid measurement above 55.9cm are seated by the largest most appropriate windows within the helicopter.

In 2023, it was identified that the weight and size of offshore workers required further re-examination. The approach has been to conduct further research on the weight and size of the offshore workforce and examine all hazards in the most comprehensive way, to identify near term, medium term, and longer-term actions which Installation dutyholders and the wider industry should consider. These actions may be directed to dutyholders, OEUK working groups or other external bodies to develop practical solutions that ensure that offshore workers who are larger are not put at greater risk during offshore incidents, and that those workers, do not inadvertently put others at risk.

This report details the status of the offshore population, and the 'design review' weight that should be used to measure the suitability of existing lifesaving equipment. The report describes the HAZID process. The report details actions and the suggested responsible action parties. The report then describes topics that should be considered when risk assessing the size and shape of offshore workers on specific installations, these considerations are unlikely to apply to all installations but are intended as prompts to assist the process.

The HAZID identified that fitness and mobility will have an impact on safety offshore in addition to the weight, shape, and size of workers. In many cases current limitations are based on equipment dimensions rather than design and safety factors, for example helicopter travel may not be possible if a passenger cannot fit into a transit suit or the lifejacket or seatbelt does not fit around them. Instead of a risk-based approach that considers the hazards that person faces themselves or poses to others.

3 Population Data 2022

In 2005, general Western populations weight was considered with corrections to reflect the offshore population, this data was validated in 2008 using anonymous records from the Vantage records system. For this latest study anonymised population data from 2022 was extracted from the Vantage system. 38,737 individual entries were examined, this significant statistical group is useful as the sample size reduces the statistical impact of inaccuracies in the recording of each individual weight measurement. Errors within the data include, zero entries, entries in pounds rather than kilos, entries below 25kg, offshore to onshore weight measurement issues including lack of scales, some installations adding in additional weight for transit suit and lifejackets. As such the Vantage data is considered best available data.

3.1 Average Weights – 2022

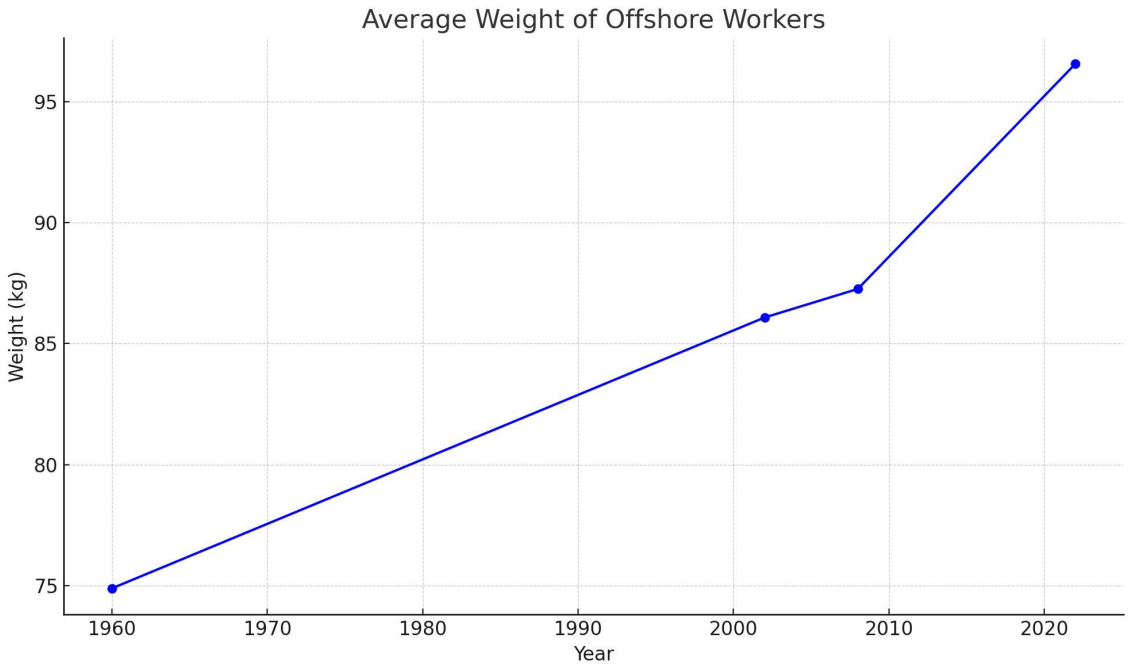

Chart 1: Average weights for offshore populations 1960 – 2022

It can be seen from Chart 1 that there has been a significant change in trajectory between the 2005/2008 data points and the current population.

The actual average weights of the population in 2022 are:

Actual 2022:

Average weight: Total: 96.56kg, Male: 97.57kg, Female: 78.48kg

The 2023 actual average weights are marginally below the design basis corrected weights from 2008 however it can be seen that this figure is likely to be exceeded over the next few years. In Chart two it can be seen that 36% of the total population is above 100kg, and 4.90% of the total population is above 125kg. These individuals may face exposure to additional risks if they are required to use lifesaving equipment which has not been designed for their weight, shape, or size.

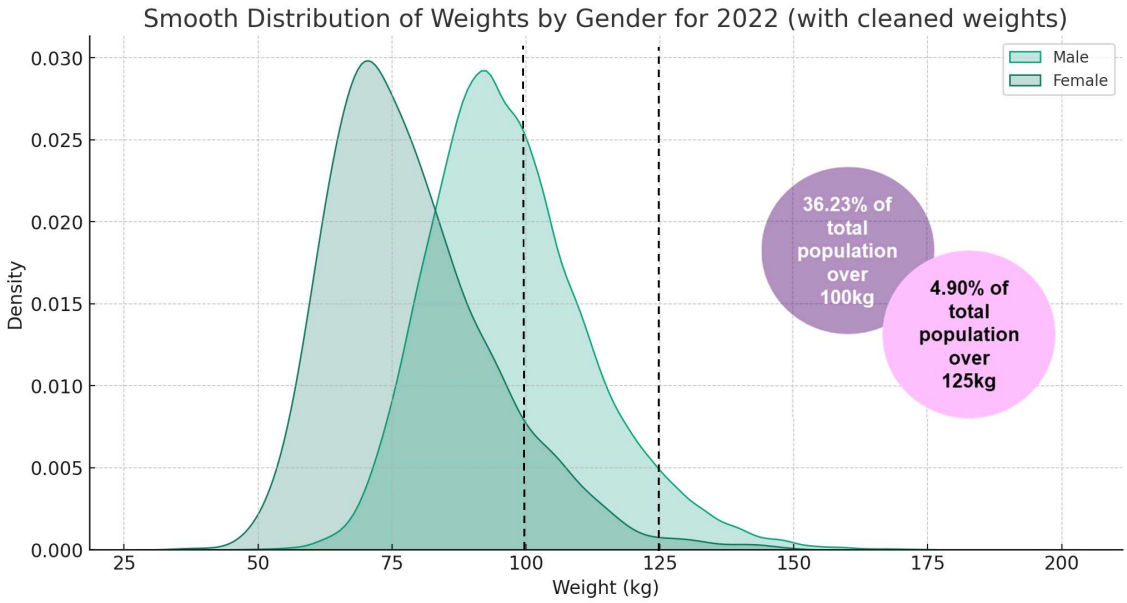

Chart 2: Kernal Distribution Plot of Weights by Gender - 2022

3.2 Corrected Weights for Design Review

The UK HSE issued Offshore Information Sheet No. 12/2008 'Big Persons in Lifeboats' that details the method for calculation of workforce weights for design review purposes and is quoted as:

"The CAA has issued guidance on the average weights to be assumed for persons travelling by helicopter to UK offshore installations. They include an allowance (about 7 kg) for the statistical variation in the average weight of a group of 15 persons, based on a 95% level of probability that the group average weight will not be exceeded. They also include an allowance for the weight of an immersion suit (3 kg). The resultant average weights to be assumed are as follows: adult males 98 kg; adult females 77 kg.

The number of persons in an offshore lifeboat will normally exceed 15. For example, 50 persons is more typical – based on information from a research project carried out for MCA, this number reduces the necessary allowance for the statistical variation in the average weight of the group from 7 kg to around 4 kg. On the other hand, the survival PPE (e.g., suit + lifejacket) used in a lifeboat typically weighs about 5 kg. Consequently, in assessing the lifeboat fully loaded weight, duty holders should use the above CAA weights (taking account of the proportion of males/females onboard the installation), unless the duty holder's assessment demonstrates that some other average weight is appropriate."

OEUK applied the same methodology of the CAA, MCA and HSE to calculate design weights. Design weights ensure that with any given population there is a 95% likelihood that equipment is not overloaded. The specific results are CAA (15 PAX) (+3kg transit suit and life jacket): Total: 126.05kg, Male: 126.05kg and Female: 106.44kg. HSE[MCA] (50PAX) (+5kg offshore life jacket and immersion suit): Total: 127.46kg, Male: 127.47kg and Female: 107.86kg. In 2008 the HSE reverted to the CAA calculation despite being lower. OEUK propose that in 2023 the CAA method is again followed but to round up to the nearest kg as detailed below:

Design Review 2023:

Total: 127kg, Male: 127kg and Female: 107kg

3.3 Extra-Broad Bi-deltoid measurement

In 2023 OEUK also reviewed the extent that Bi-deltoid measurements impact on the offshore population. Chart 3 below details the bi-deltoid measurements in 2022. The XBR category accounted for 2.68% of the population. It can be determined that the weight of persons offshore is a greater hazard that the bi-deltoid measurement. Further this aspect is managed effectively through the on-going measurement and re-measurement by qualified individuals and during OEUK offshore medical assessments.

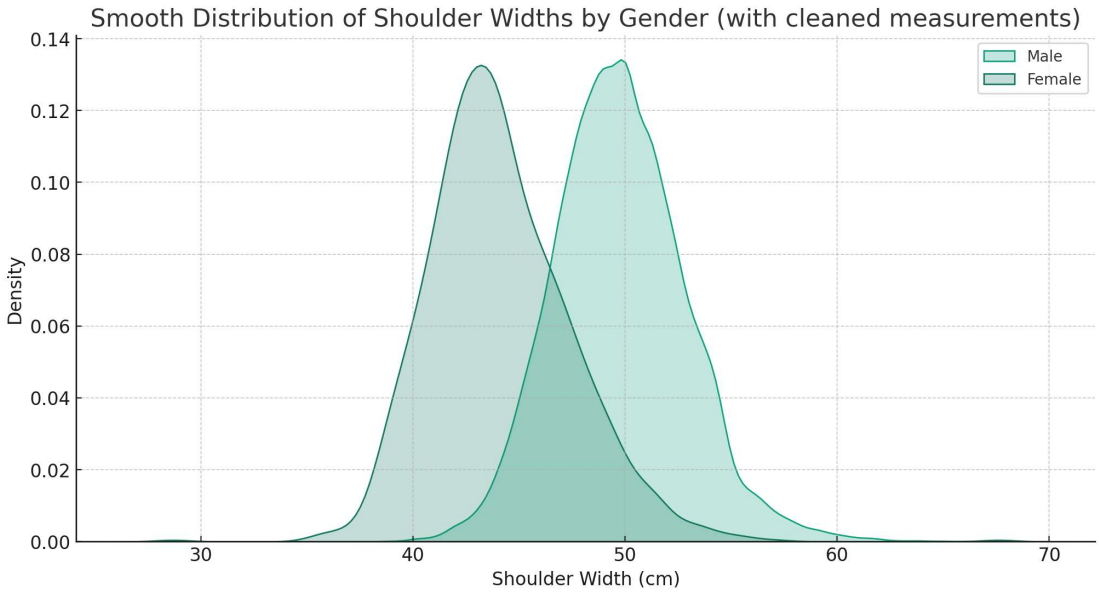

Chart 3: bi-deltoid measurements 2022.

4 Regulatory Context

The HSE attended the HAZID event and provided useful context on the regulatory requirements with which dutyholders must comply in relation to the weight, size and shape of offshore populations and some further insight into recent regulatory findings. The HSE confirmed that the associated issues go beyond lifeboat issues and are related to lifesaving apparatus (LSA).

4.1 Offshore Installations (Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995

The main regulations which installation duty holders should consider are the Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995 known as PFEER 1995.

The regulations for consideration are:

4. General Duty

This duty sets out the requirement for protecting persons on the installation from fire and explosion; and securing effective emergency response.

5. Assessment

Guidance on the Prevention of Fire and Explosion and Emergency Response on Offshore Installations Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L65) states that:

"52 Regulation 5(3) requires the assessment to be recorded but does not specify how. dutyholders may decide on the best approach, for example: (a) to prepare a single, stand-alone document; or (b) to prepare a series of documents; or (c) to record the assessment as an integral part of the safety case document.

53 dutyholders are free to keep supporting information in separate documents or reference information already held in other documentation.

54 The regulation requires the dutyholder to repeat the assessment as often as may be appropriate, for example before making changes to the installation or to working activities or introducing new equipment or systems.

55 Any changes to measures introduced and their associated performance standards following the initial or subsequent assessment are circumstances where it may be appropriate to repeat an assessment. A repeat assessment may be appropriate when this action is identified following a review of the existing assessment in the context of the proposed change. Changes may cover performance standards, associated maintenance and inspection routines, or verification activities. This is to ensure that interaction with other existing measures – including safety-critical elements (SCEs), safety and environmental-critical elements (SECEs) and specified plant – is evaluated, that the assessment continues to be valid and to make sure that duties under PFEER are still met."

15. Arrangements for Evacuation

L65:

"195 This regulation requires the dutyholder to make suitable arrangements for all personnel to leave the installation safely in the event of an emergency which requires evacuation, and to be taken to a place of safety.

196 It covers the means of evacuation which the dutyholder may provide on the installation, such as TEMPSC, and the arrangements the dutyholder may make with others off the installation, such as helicopter operators."

19. Suitability and condition of plant

L65:

"258 Regulation 19(1)(a) requires plant to be suitable, by design, construction, or adaptation, for the actual work it is provided to do. Performance standards, determined in the assessment required by regulation 5, should be the basis for assessing that plant required to deal with major accident hazards is suitable for its purpose.

259 The following approaches might contribute to ensuring the initial suitability of plant:

(a) design, construction or adaptation by reference to appropriate, relevant standards. These may be international or national standards recognised by an appropriate standards-making body, appropriate industry recognised standards, or appropriate company standards;

(b) where relevant standards do not exist, ensuring that the scheme of examination includes scrutiny to make sure that plant and equipment chosen is fit for its purpose (e.g. through design review, testing, assessment of operational experience in similar situations);

(c) a combination of these approaches. For example, a dutyholder may wish to use an existing standard in a novel situation. In these circumstances, the use of that standard should be checked as suitable."

4.2 HSE Inspection Findings

At the HAZID exercise the Health and Safety Executive presented examples of recent inspection findings that have raised concerns in relation to the size and shape of people offshore. These have been captured as risks in section 7.

4.3 Design Code Limits and considerations

4.3.1 Lifeboat Design Standards

The HSE highlighted that current design standards may not be keeping up with population changes:

SOLAS requirements are normally based on an average weight per person of 75kg (now 82.5kg) with a maximum design mass of 100kg per seat/seatbelt.

DNV E406 – maximum mass of 150kg.

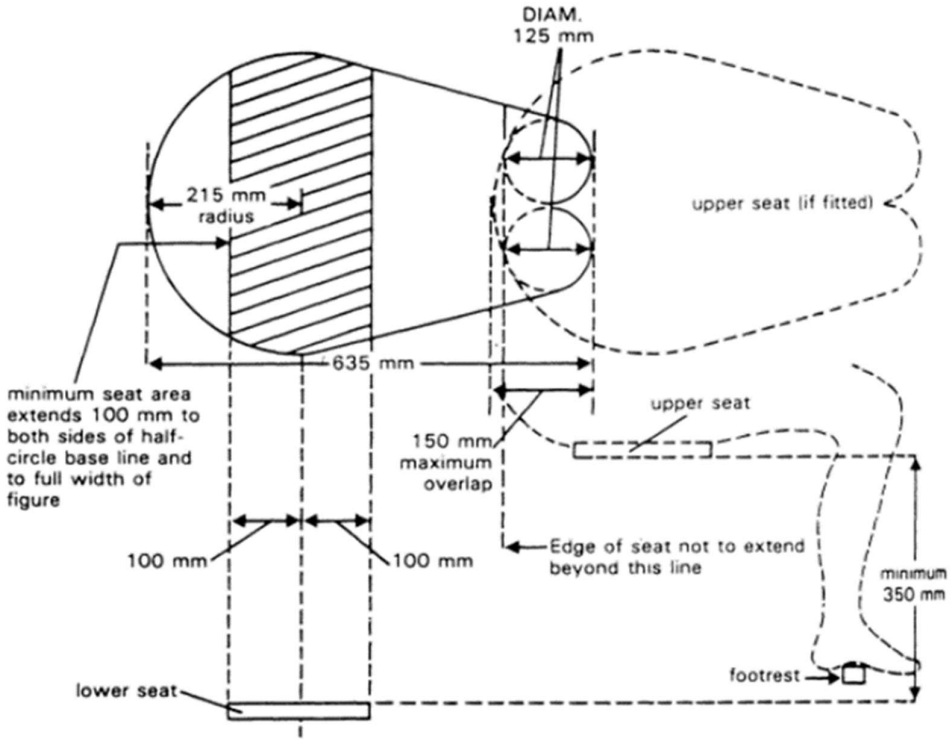

Figure 1: Ergonomic Measurements for Lifeboat seat design – SOLAS extract

Current population weights and size should be considered in relation to the following points:

- Size and ability to seat larger people correctly inside TEMPSC
- Strength of anchor points for harness attached directly to GRP
- Suitability of harness (size and load)
- Potential for increased acceleration forces on harnesses – wave motion, lowering, over-turning
- Potential for greater loads on launch system (i.e. centrifugal brake) and waterborne stability of TEMPSC (i.e. self-right ability)
- Average offshore worker (plus immersion suit and lifejacket)

4.3.2 Escape Device Design

Personal escape devices used commonly in the North Sea are rated to a maximum of 150kg. The upper weight limit is in relation to the effect of friction action on the specialist device descender. The escape device will still function with heavier individuals as it is tested to a much higher capacity however the individual may experience a higher speed that others if they were to experience an uncontrolled descent.

5 Conduct of the HAZID

The HAZID was conducted on Monday 18th September 2023 at OEUK offices in Aberdeen and online as a hybrid event. The HAZID team was comprised of subject matter experts from across industry covering all topics. The attendees arranged from installation operators, contractors, OIMs, LSA equipment manufacturers, lifeboat manufacturers, safety, and health professionals. The event was facilitated by the OEUK Health and Safety Team. The HAZID was framed around 6 key prompts.

5.1 Key Prompts:

1. Mobilisation and Helicopter Travel
2. Offshore Operations
3. Installation Emergencies
4. Installation Evacuation
5. Escape and Rescue
6. Health

5.2 HAZID outputs

The contributors identified hazards under the key prompts and, where appropriate, linked those hazards to existing hazard controls. The raw data has been collated and processed by OEUK removing duplication etc and is over the next two sections. The first, Section 6, includes clear actions with indications of the group, body, or persons who is deemed the most suitable person to address the issue and an indication of the timescales expected to close the action. The second, Section 7, details risks which should be consider when conducting any PFEER Regulation 5 Assessment.

6 Actions and Recommended Action Owners

The following section details the material actions that were identified as part of the HAZID; they have been assigned to specific bodies, groups or people most suitable to close out the action and a rough indication of timescales for action has been provided to aid with prioritisation. These are detailed in the following subsections related to the prompts from the HAZID event.

Following the event, OEUK shared the presentation slides and provided an indication of the immediate actions that dutyholders could carry out in response to the event. This report supersedes those initial actions as a more comprehensive record of the actions from the HAZID.

6.1 General Actions

Action	Action Owner	Term
Consider measures to ensure that lifeboats and lifesaving appliances are not overloaded, this may include balancing the population between boats and may require pre-mobilisation information to allow for sufficient planning depending on the specific installation sensitivities.	Installation Operators	short
Consider a partial lifeboat loading exercise with an indicative population to demonstrate that current seating arrangements and access requirements are suitable and sufficient and identify if other arrangements may be required.	Installation Operators	short
Review Info sheet 12-2008 (attached) considering current populations for your installation and ensure arrangements remain valid.	Installation Operators	short
It is recommended that installation dutyholders perform a PFEER reg. 5 assessment considering the information contained within this report, and any other relevant information.	Installation Operators	On Publication of this report
It is recommended that installation dutyholders review Evacuation Performance Standards to ensure that they continue to be valid and achievable with the existing offshore populations.	Installation Operators	On Publication of this report

6.2 Mobilisation and Helicopter Travel

Action	Action Owner	Term
Consider developing a system to obtain pre-mobilisation information on individual weights to allow proactive management of lifeboat and LSA capacity	Installation Operators	Short

Communicate HAZID risks associated with normal helicopter travel to helicopter operators	OEUK Aviation Technical Group / Offshore Helicopters Safety Leadership Group	Short
Communicate risks associated with Search and Rescue Helicopters to MCA	OEUK	Short
Investigate if life rafts on helicopters are rated for full PAX on flight	OEUK Aviation Technical Group / Offshore Helicopters Safety Leadership Group	Medium

6.3 Offshore Operations

Action	Action Owner	Term
Confirm Grating Capacity for BPO – Steel and GRP	Asset Integrity Technical Group	Medium

6.4 Installation Emergencies

Action	Action Owner	Term
Confirm Grating Capacity for BPO – Steel and GRP	Asset Integrity Technical Group	Medium
Investigate available equipment for large/ heavy casualties	EERTAG	Medium

6.5 Evacuation

Action	Action Owner	Term
Are additional body measurements required beyond bi-deltoid? OEUK Engage with LSA Manufacturers	OEUK H&S Manger	Medium
Investigate extent of the issue for lifeboats including overall rating, safety factors, seatbelt capacity, self-righting, and seating plans	OEUK to Engage LSA Equipment Manufacturers and Raise with EERTAG	Medium

6.6 Escape and Rescue

Action	Action Owner	Term
Investigate Search and Rescue helicopter stretcher capacity	MCA	Medium

Investigate performance of lifejackets such as self-righting with bigger persons	OEUK to Engage LSA Equipment Manufacturers and Raise with EERTAG	Medium
Investigate implications for life rafts including access step and overall capacity	OEUK to Engage LSA Equipment Manufacturers and Raise with EERTAG	Medium

6.7 Health & Medical

Action	Action Owner	Term
Investigate cross industry task finish group to investigate Fitness for Future topic and actions below - CLOSED	Step Change in Safety to lead under wellbeing work group	Medium
Consider appropriate nature of offshore diet, food and nutrition on manned and NUI installations	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Long
Adequacy and accessibility of offshore Exercise, gym access, etc to be considered	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Long
Consider if risk of increasing co-morbidity issues require more robust response in offshore medical assessment guidelines	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Long
Investigate if the risk of suspension trauma greater with heavier people?	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Short
Consider alternatives to BMI as a measure of health	OEUK Occupational Health and Hygiene Technical Group	Long
Confirm if medics are trained for handling and treating larger persons	OEUK Occupational Health and Hygiene Technical Group	Medium
Consider if the fitness of offshore medics should equal that of ERT	Topsides Medical Forum / OEUK	Long
Review existing data to determine if further insight on health risks, medivac and medicals can provide further insight	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Long
Identify appropriate measures to provide adequate health surveillance on this issue	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Long

Is acute vs chronic risk understood and communicated	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Long
Engage with the workforce on these topics	Step Change in Safety Wellbeing Group	Short

7 General Considerations for Risk Assessment of the size and shape of workers on offshore installations

Mobilisation and Helicopter Travel – Prompt 1	
Risk	Existing Control
Helicopter seatbelts – length, design load, release of buckle under tension	
Helicopter Ssat capacity exceeded – designed to collapse on impact – potential greater risk to injury	
Helicopter seat width – in ability for a person to sit next to big person or person not sitting safely on the seat, or simply uncomfortable	Seatbelt length – no extensions permitted
Aircraft Weight Capacity Exceeded	Personnel weights taken before travel - offshore scale calibration required.
People too big to fit through window	BMI >40 can trigger Pass 'fit in helicopter seat and lifejacket' tests
Cannot fit suit	Limiting factor but evidence 'custom' suits common
Helideck access – can be physical climbing stairs with baggage	Carried to Health Prompt 6
Winching Operations - SWL	Carried to Rescue Prompt 5
S92 Steps are rated at 180kg	Some operators task an alternative airframe type for personnel weighing over 180kg
EBS duration may be reduced for less fit persons	
General mobility for donning flight suit, getting into aircraft cabin	
Fit of lifejacket and effectiveness	Pass 'fit in helicopter seat and lifejacket' tests
Lifejacket not suitable for mass	Larger persons more buoyant anyway – limited impact (MCA)

Increased frequency of flights due to reduction in total persons on each flight	
Non-XBR escape past XBR or XBR+ person	
Helideck rating	Personnel weights taken before travel, managed by CAA CAP437

Offshore Operations – Prompt 2	
Risk	Existing Control
Confined space entry – size of aperture, nature of work, rescue equipment	
Congested space – short of confined space, as for confined space	
Rescue from height plans assessed for suitability for all persons	
PPE fit – all aspects	
Old installations designed for smaller size persons	
Size of bed, suitability of mattress, constrained cabins, capacity of top bunk, capacity of bunk ladder	
Snoring and impact on others	
Fitness for stair climbing or ladders	Copied to prompt 6
Harnesses and fall arrest equipment weight limits	
Chair capacities, wall mounted toilets, wet room floors	
Reduced personnel to meet ERT fitness requirements	
Personnel transfer and walk to work	
Mobility around smaller hazards such as step-overs	
Consider if body shape and weight should be considered at task risk assessment and toolbox talks as a specific prompt	

Some installations require greater physical exertion such as extensive stair climbing	
SWL of scaffold systems offshore may be an issue	Should be checked prior to used
Lone working may increase risk of what?	
Diameter of back scratchers too small	
Emergency sleeping arrangements on NUIs suitable?	
Weight limit of personnel lifts	
Team composition attending Normally Unmanned Installations	
How does knowledge and competence get preserved if restrictions in personnel are required	

Installation Emergencies – Prompt 3	
Risk	Existing Control
Stretcher SWL	
Manual Handling of Stretcher based casualties including routes to sickbay, helidecks and lifeboats.	
Has risk to responders been considered	
Can additional rescue equipment be stored appropriately on board	
Identification of appropriate lifting aids for casualties	
Do cranes need to be rated for man riding if used for rescue	
If cranes are relied on for rescue, consider availability such as weather	
Should pre-emptive lift plans be prepared	
What delays in rescue could be incurred, can that risk be quantified?	
Life ring diameter suitable?	
Smoke hood seal diameter	
SWL of sickbay equipment	
Breathing apparatus and escape set fitting	
Is BPO a drill scenario and can rescue be demonstrated	
Would a larger/heavier rescue dummy be required	

Offshore lifejacket sizing	
Big persons in ERT considered	

Evacuation – Prompt 4	
Risk	Existing Control
Muster Point overall capacity	
Sufficient range of emergency equipment for all sizes of offshore population	
Life raft rating – including davit launched	
Overall space in life raft sufficient	
Most life raft steps rated to 100kg	
Life jackets offshore suitable for whole population	
Limited ability to reduce any more lifeboat weight (water/ fuel)	
Potential for overloading newer lifeboats	
Filling lifeboats to demonstrate population can fit is a concern to workforce	
Entry and egress from TEMPSC for less mobile people	
Seating positions on existing lifeboats – XR equivalent	
Loading stretchers into free-fall and twin-fall lifeboats	
Time taken for less mobile workforce to muster and evacuate exceeding temporary refuge rating	
Additional helicopter flights required to fully down man	

Escape and Rescue – Prompt 5	
Risk	Existing Control
Search and Rescue winching SWL	SAR winching limit is (272.16Kg's) with a surge of up to 900Lbs (408.23Kg's). It is unlikely even the largest winchman is likely to top 125kgs (with kit) and therefore that would still leave around 147kgs for a casualty. However, in some cases landing the helicopter may be preferred and therefore the helideck capacity for the S92 SAR may be a consideration too.
Immersion / abandonment suit limits	
Limits for tertiary escape devices understood (DONUT/ S-SCAPE)	
Rescue craft capacity	
Dacon Scoop weight limits and operation	
Rescue conveyor capacity	
Selantic Evacuation Systems and other chutes suitability	
Escape-to-Sea ladder rating and condition	
Suitability of handrails as anchor point for tertiary escape devices and condition	
ERRV Medical Facilities Capacity and SWL of equipment	

Health and Fitness – Prompt 6	
Risk	Existing Control
Helideck access – can be physical climbing stairs with baggage	
Fitness for stair climbing or ladders – reliance on lift?	
Culture – is it supportive of healthy lifestyles	
Health surveillance appropriate	
Does offshore lifestyle contribute – catering, bond, working practices, etc.	
Are current health initiatives monitored for effectiveness	
Identify existing health initiatives to implement	

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