

Safety Alert

Notice No. 11
March 3, 1994

CRANE/HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

Recently on a Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region (POCSR) platform, a helicopter dropped off a passenger and was idling in preparation of take-off when crane operators reentered the cabs of both cranes and one crane was started up, with the boom swinging in line with the helideck. The pilot exited the helicopter and waved to the crane operator, who swung the boom back into a safe position and shut down the crane.

To prevent recurrence of this kind of incident, the Minerals Management Service is reminding platform operators about the following safety measures specified in API RP 2D, Recommended Practice for Operation and Maintenance of Offshore Cranes, which is incorporated by reference into MMS's regulations at 30 CFR 250.20, Safe and Workmanlike Operations, (c) Crane operations:

"Section 2.1.3o. Where cranes are positioned in the proximity of helidecks or approach/take-off zones, they should not be operated while a helicopter is landing or taking off. The boom should be positioned and secured against swinging so there will be no interference with flight operations. The operator should not be at the control station during normal helicopter operations."

In addition, attached for your reference is Helicopter Safety Advisory Conference Recommended Practice No. 89-1, which details three recommended practices. The second recommended practice underscores the need for the crane operators to shut down the cranes and leave the cabs during helicopter operations, including when a helicopter is running on the helideck.

Finally, to avoid the kind of miscommunication that contributed to the incident, we recommend the following:

1. Upon radio/telephone notification of aircraft arrival, the platform personnel receiving the communication should make a platform announcement, including the estimated time of helicopter arrival.
2. Upon visual observation of a circling helicopter, an announcement should be made regarding the impending arrival.
3. Cranes should then be secured per platform procedures as soon as safely practicable. The crane operators should exit the cabs and remain outside of the cabs until helicopter departure or shutdown (rotor stopped) has been assured visually or by direct communication with the helicopter pilot.

These procedures need to be emphasized at your upcoming platform safety meetings.

HSAC - RP

Helicopter Safety Advisory Conference - Recommended Practice

No 89- 1

CRANE - HELICOPTER OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

Historical experience has shown that catastrophic consequences can occur when industry safe practices for crane - helicopter operations are not observed. The following recommended practices will minimize risks during crane and helicopter operations.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

1. Personnel awareness: (a) crane operators and pilots should develop a mutual understanding and respect of the others' operational limitations and cooperate in the spirit of safety;
 2. (b) pilots need to be aware that crane operators sometimes cannot release the load to cradle the crane boom, such as when attached to wireline lubricators or supporting diving bells; and (c) crane operators need to be aware that helicopters require warm up before takeoff, a 2 minute cool down before shutdown, and cannot circle for extended lengths of time because of fuel consumption.
2. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT WHEN HELICOPTERS ARE APPROACHING, MANEUVERING, TAKING OFF, OR RUNNING ON THE HELIPORT, CRANES BE SHUTDOWN AND THE OPERATOR LEAVE THE CAB. Cranes not in use shall have their booms cradled, if feasible. If in use, the crane's boom(s) are to be pointed away from the heliport and the crane shutdown for helicopter operations. Pilots will not approach, land on, takeoff or have rotor blades turning on heliports of structures not complying with the above practice.
3. It is recommended that cranes on offshore platforms, rigs, vessels, or any other facility which could interfere with helicopter operations (including approach/departure paths): (a) be equipped with a red rotating beacon or red high intensity strobe light connected to the system powering the crane, indicating the crane is under power; (b) be designed to allow the operator a maximum view of the helideck area and should be equipped with wide-angle mirrors to eliminate blind spots; and (c) paint crane boom tips, headache balls, and hooks with high visibility international orange.

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