

Offshore Vessel Personnel Transfer

Personnel transfers at sea can be a risky business. With ever-improved offshore safety in mind, it is a topic that has led to the publication of 'Guidance on the Transfer of Personnel to and from Offshore Vessels' (IMCA SEL 025 / IMCA M 202) by the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA).

"One of the activities specific to offshore operations is the transfer of personnel between vessels and other offshore structures," explains IMCA's Chief Executive, Hugh Williams. "Such transfers can include movements of personnel at crew change and shift change from vessel to vessel and also between vessels, offshore structures, barges and crew boats as well as to and from the quayside.

"Our new document is intended to provide guidance to the offshore industry on the safe transfer of personnel at sea. It covers risk assessment, training and competence, responsibility, equipment and communications, and focuses on the main methods of personnel transfer between vessels, offshore structures and the quayside.

"We identify the primary methods of personnel transfer as small boat or launch; larger crew boat or support vessel; personnel transfer basket; gangways, bridge or accommodation ladders, including motion-compensated hydraulic gangways; and mating 'surfer' structures allowing personnel to transfer safely.

"For each case the new guidance note covers the main safety issues and provides information on the specialist equipment that may be involved (such as 'surfers') as well as special duties or responsibilities of personnel involved, particularly with regard to communications. We do not cover transfer by helicopter as this is very much a separate subject, adequately addressed elsewhere by specialist publications."

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