POB AND MUSTERING: DO YOU KNOW ENOUGH?

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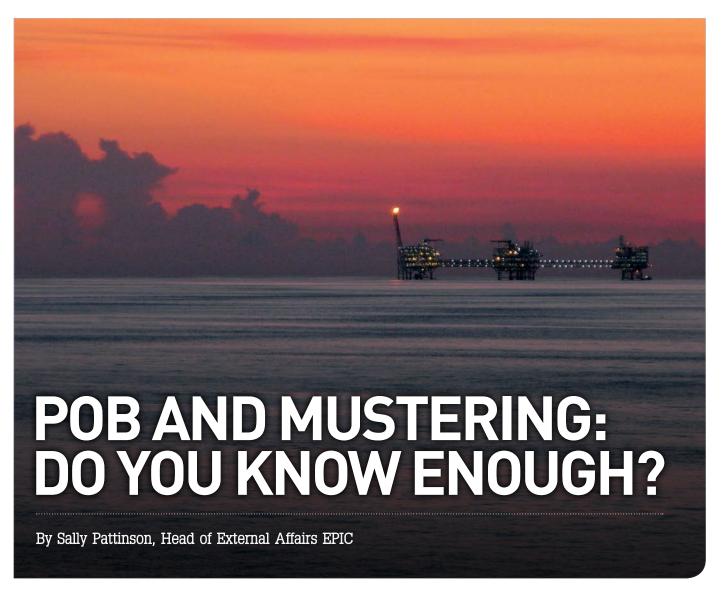
EPIC's Personnel on Board (POB) and Mustering technology system was developed by its MD, Ian Traquair, as a direct response to Piper Alpha. His vision was, and still is, to keep personnel as safe as possible and reduce risk in the event of offshore operational disaster.

It is a good system. It works in the harshest environments. It is accurate, efficient and cost effective. There are other systems out there. Some of them work and some may be suitable for harsh environments.

So why is EPIC finding an increasing number of clients approaching them to replace systems that have been installed on vessels or platforms that have been found by operators to be unfit for purpose? Is it complacency? Is it to save money? Is it ignorance? How much do people really know and understand about POB and Mustering Systems? And how much does

it matter anyway? Perhaps we should ask the people and families who know about working in these harsh environments.

What do you really need to know about POB and Mustering? For many the answer is obvious but clearly not for all.

POB systems are usually systems that provide a flight management tool that will support logistics. The good ones

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will include an HR function that contain personnel contact details, qualifications and certificates.

But a POB system alone will not automatically provide a mustering facility. If all you have is a POB system, you will need a mustering system too. It is possible to operate a paper system for a small number of personnel or use an old fashioned T card system. They may work.

Imagine that you have 200 people to muster in an emergency. How do you do this quickly? How do you do it accurately? How do the emergency services know how to respond to families who want to know that their loved ones are safe? Mustering quickly and accurately and the ability to report onshore and offshore in minutes in an emergency situation can be the difference between life and death.

Only the other day, I was talking to an Offshore Engineer who was bemoaning the

**Computer ▶
control room**

fact that last time he was involved in a mustering drill, he and everyone else had stood around for 45 minutes whilst the people responsible tried to sort it out. A few days earlier, the girlfriend of an offshore driller who herself works in the industry, openly admitted to me that she really didn't know what happened on her boyfriend's platform: she just assumed it was safe. She wanted to know.

An effective POB and Mustering system will be fully supported offshore 24 hours a day every day of the year. It will reduce risk because it is accurate, it will reduce costs because it is efficient; it will improve safety as it will work in harsh environments, can support mustering in less than 10 minutes and accurately manage gangway movements, increasingly important for Walk-to-Work; it will have the facility to report in real time onshore and offshore.

Apart from the obvious risks to personnel in failing to install an effective POB and Mustering system, there are also real costs involved as some of our clients are finding. They range from operational downtime costs to fines to the real costs of removing a system that doesn't work and replacing it with one that does. And then of course there is the cost of reputational risk…the list goes on together with the arguments about who pays.

Regulation may be tighter and changing globally but in the meantime, systems that are not fit for purpose are still out there. In order to avoid them, the checklist at the end of this article should help you ensure your provider selects and installs a system that will be fit for purpose and will work. Bear in mind that short term savings may lead to long term costs. In this industry, there are no shortcuts to saving lives and money but there are cost effective, efficient solutions out there that really work and that can be integrated with other systems. How do we make sure that all personnel are working in an environment that has one?

POB and Mustering: An Overview

- Managing and keeping personnel safe offshore is a legal obligation. This obligation falls to the Offshore Installation Manager (OIM)/Captain. The POB (Personnel on Board) list must be available in real-time at all times, 24/7
- An up to date and accurate POB and Muster/ Lifeboat list available at all times is absolute, in case of an emergency situation
- If an emergency situation should occur it is the responsibility of the OIM/Captain to produce a POB list accounting for all mustered persons, a lifeboat manifest and a list of missing personnel
- The POB manifest and missing persons list has to be given without delay to the required Government Agencies, Police, Coastguard and Navy. The accuracy of these lists is also the responsibility of the OIM/Captain and Chief Operating Officer of the parent company.

Note: An International standard is being developed indicating a requirement to muster the complete POB within 16 minutes and to report the details immediately to the relevant Authorities i.e. Coastguard, Police, Government Agencies and Navy.