

Shift Management in Oil and Gas Field Workers

by

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Abstract

This research is based on the lives of Oil and Gas field workers working in shifts and how the continuous shift-based job effects their lives. The procedure of proper shift management is very important for the welfare of the work force and the overall impact on Oil and Gas industry will be more than others as the shifts for Oil and Gas workers is same worldwide however to execute them in proper manner is what makes the difference. This research will go through the shift procedures within one of the biggest oilfield, the North Sea Oil field and then look into the strategical shift related stress audit. This research will also look on the lives of field workers working in Pasaki field located in Sindh province of Pakistan and evaluate the impact of shifts.

Keywords: Field, Health, Management, North Sea, Oil and Gas, Pakistan, Shift, Strategy

Introduction:

Shift management comes under the umbrella of organization's responsibility to let its employees work under better and realistic time protocols. Shift management not only includes the daily time bracket a worker supposed to work but the job rotation (on/off days) also comes under this category. In order to analyze the proper way of executing the shifts on Oil and Gas field workers, this research studies the impact of North Sea Shift Strategy. The psychological stresses related with shifts will be analyzed and further the research proceeds towards the field of Pasaki, Sindh Pakistan where the impact of shift management on field worker will be studied.

Review, Methodology and Results:

The first factor to be considered under shift management is the hour field workers supposed to work while on field. It doesn't matter whether the field is onshore or offshore, the worker's expertise supposed to be utilized for 12 hours. The secondary factor is to duration a worker supposed to stay on field and it varies from location to location but the general worker right consensus is to give a worker, whether on supervisor role or in labor position, equal rotation. For example, during a two-week tour of field a worker is working at least 168 hours and if for some reason the tour expands a week more than minimum duration of works jumps to 216 hours.

The most important and versatile field of Oil and Gas upstream sector is the North Sea offshore fields. Analyzing the management of shifts there, each and every worker is distributed as per their expertise in different categories. There is nothing as such a general shift; here mostly

the shifts have been divided in 12 hours working duration starting from seven in morning till seven in night and the night shift works from seven in evening till seven in morning. However, there are some installations where the shift timings are from noon to 12 at night and vice versa but this pattern have been discouraged specifically due to health constraints on human body typically for night shift workers.

There are two patterns of shifts being followed in North Sea, one is fixed shift pattern and the other one is rollover shift pattern. In case of fixed shift pattern the schedule is to work first 14 days in day and the rest 14 days in night shift. However in rollover shift pattern, the shift changes at the end of every week.

It is quite rare to work overtime due to gruesome shift time and rotations but sometimes the lack of senior expertise workers or emergencies could bring another extra load on field worker. However, there would be no extra wages to work overtime whether onshore or offshore. It has been noticed that senior managers (nearly 64%) assigned offshore worked more than 100 hours a week and some 26% field workers also reported working 94-100 hours a week (Source: North Sea Drilling).

The recent stress audit conducted by Bullet Proof people organization to analyze the North Sea workers conditions brought some great insight. Almost 310 employees from 14 different organizations who were working on 97 different offshore rigs took part in the audit. The questionnaire was simply designed asking the rate of contention, lifestyle on field, job difficulties, job hazards and the degree of their psychological stress.

As per audit the personals took part are in between 21 to 60 years old, where just 10% lies below 25 years. 74% are married with 12% divorced, 45% are getting proper 14 by 14 on off rotation having both day and night shift, just 8% have qualified degrees and 34% are smokers.

When asked about the questionnaire three main reasons contributed in workers lives pessimism pops up. One is the lack of career growth prospects because of shaky Oil and Gas prices, other is disoriented work pattern because of change in shifts and hard rotations and the third is insecure work place plus harsh environment. The changes in Oil and Gas prices adversely effects the ability of the employee to get promotion at the right time, even instead of thinking of promotion sometimes there is the counter effect of anxiety if they could be able to keep their job.

Such a scenario also powers the lack of contentment within them and combining this effect with the commitment of doing shifts reduces the level of enthusiasm. Sometimes these sort of dragging circumstances could even help in losing the proper concentration while on shift and increase the number of chances of having some accident or near miss. Accidents, near misses are more prevalent in tougher and harsher conditions and as the third category clearly dictate the dissatisfaction between the field workers due to hard and harsher environments of fields. Hence making an amalgam of these three reasons the situation got more dire and difficult for field workers which in turn could as well reduce their working efficiency.

With the help of this audit it is clearly understandable how much is the necessity to provide better shift management is important. The unpredictability of work pattern brings an unwanted up steam stresses. A short notice for emergency recall, last minute changes in crew delay or delay in reliever coming on rig due to personal or environmental conditions are all the causes to reignite stresses.

In order to further understand the impact of proper shift management the research has been carried on the lives of workers in the field of Pasaki located in Sothern Sindh province of Pakistan. When analyzed the clinical attributable conditions of the field workers three most outstanding reasons comes up.

First reason is the physical medical condition which occurred due to change in body pattern while adjusting in different environment. Sore throat, gastric problem, viral infections contribute mostly for these medical conditions.

Secondly and most surprisingly the second factor is insomnia. The middle age group suffered from most of this effect specifically due to change in shifts and adjusting to those shifts while working. Even on days off it took workers some days to adjust in the daily pattern of living in their homes. This factor clearly represents the importance of having better Shift management and effects of hard shifts on workers lives.

The third factor is the Psychological stresses mostly sue to deprivation of social activities and remoteness of work place and to adjust in on/off days. Here also the Shift management played a vital role showing that the lack in its understandability by organizations effects not only worker's physical situation but mental as well.

It should be worth mentioning that the second and third factor not only affects the workers but their direct family members as well.

Conclusion:

This research brings in light a very rare condition of the field workers life, proper Shift management. By understanding the proper shift management techniques and the audit in North Sea underlines the necessity of having better Shift management specifically for field-based workers. Carrying this research in Pasaki field of Pakistan brought this research to another level where it's clearly understood how two out of top three factors are due to improper shifts among the workers. It's very important for the organizations to give a proper rotation to their employees or contractors and also compensate workers with extra financial benefits and family recreational packages.

It is also important that a regulation should be passed where its obligatory for the employers to give field workers proper on off rotation because in countries having bad record of human rights, specifically Middle East or Asian countries, companies are taking advantage of higher unemployment rate and take employees on their own rotational conditions which have an adverse effect on employees physical and mental condition.

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