

Necessity for a Standardized Occupational Health and Safety Management System: An Exploratory Study from the Danish Offshore Wind Sector

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Abstract : Denmark is well ahead in generating electricity from renewable sources. The offshore wind sector is playing the pivotal role to achieve this target. Though there is a rapid growth of offshore wind sector in Denmark, still there is a dearth of synchronization in OHS (occupational health and safety) regulation and standards. Therefore, this paper attempts to ascertain: i) what are the major challenges of the company specific OHS standards? ii) why does the offshore wind industry need a standardized OHS management system? and iii) who can play the key role in this process? To achieve these objectives, this research applies the interview and survey techniques. This study has identified several key challenges in OHS management system which are; gaps in coordination and communication among the stakeholders, gaps in incident reporting systems, absence of a harmonized OHS standard and blame culture. Furthermore, this research has identified eleven key stakeholders who are actively involve with the offshore wind business in Denmark. As noticed, the relationships among these stakeholders are very complex specially between operators and sub-contractors. The respondent technicians are concerned with the compliance of various third-party OHS standards (e.g. ISO 31000, ISO 29400, Good practice guidelines by G+) which are applying by various offshore companies. On top of these standards, operators also impose their own OHS standards. From the technicians point of angle, many of these standards are not even specific for the offshore wind sector. So, it is a big challenge for the technicians and sub-contractors to comply with different company specific standards which also elevate the price of their services offer to the operators. For instance, when a sub-contractor is competing for a bidding, it must fulfill a number of OHS requirements (which demands many extra documantions) set by the individual operator and/the turbine supplier. According to sub-contractors' point of view these extra works consume too much time to prepare the bidding documents and they also need to train their employees to pass the specific OHS certification courses to accomplish the demand for individual clients and individual project. The sub-contractors argued that in many cases these extra documentations and OHS certificates are inessential to ensure the quality service. So, a standardized OHS management procedure (which could be applicable for all the clients) can easily solve this problem. In conclusion, this study highlights that i) development of a harmonized OHS standard applicable for all the operators and turbine suppliers, ii) encouragement of technicians' active participation in the OHS management, iii) development of a good safety leadership, and, iv) sharing of experiences among the stakeholders (specially operators-operators-sub contractors) are the most vital strategies to overcome the existing challenges and to achieve the goal of 'zero accident/harm' in the offshore wind industry.

Keywords : green energy, offshore, safety, Denmark

Conference Title : ICRESO 2018 : International Conference on Renewable Energy and Sustainable Development

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : November 12-13, 2018