

Met Office provides vital forecasting during North Sea storms

19 February 2014 - Harsh weather over the North Sea, with average wind and wave conditions the highest in any December since 1981, has led to many operational challenges for a number of oil and gas companies.



Detailed weather information is vital for offshore workers, and the Met Office in Aberdeen has been providing North Sea companies with a range of bespoke site-specific forecasts and warnings.

Vessels travelling to rigs to deliver diesel for generators, and to supply fresh water, have been faced with wave heights and wind speeds consistently above the long term average, and helicopter transit has been severely restricted - posing additional operational challenges for companies and often making deliveries impossible.

Patrick Sachon, Head of Oil & Gas at the Met Office, said: "During this challenging winter, our detailed and bespoke forecasts are providing companies throughout the North Sea with important weather information. This is enabling them to plan and make informed decisions on safety, both for staff operating and maintaining rigs and for their assets."

The Met Office recently assisted with the evacuation of 75 workers from a platform, following warnings of high waves from their bespoke forecast.

 A report (PDF, 2 MB) compiled by the Met Office showed that in December 2013 many offshore rigs experienced the highest average wave heights and wind speeds seen in any December for 30 years. The highest significant wave height was recorded as 13 m in the northern North Sea, whilst the highest mean wind speed was 60 knots, also recorded in the northern North Sea, both occurring on 5 December 2013.

Making the most of the weather opportunities and avoiding damaging weather is critical for oil and gas companies working in North Sea regions, where health and safety is paramount. To enable observers to make accurate aviation weather reports for offshore helicopter operations the Met Office runs a two-day course on **Offshore Meteorological Observing** covering the theory and practical skills required to make weather reports to the necessary standard to ensure the safety of helicopter operations. The next courses take place at Humberside, 18-19 March and in Aberdeen, 23-24 April 2014. The Met Office also offers an **Offshore Meteorological Observing Refresher**, an online course to refresh and update the knowledge of observing staff.