

Thirty years of saving lives



03.03.2013 **When the alarm sounds, it doesn't take many minutes before the search and rescue helicopters on Ekofisk are in the air. They constantly carry out rescue and ambulance missions in the southern part of the North Sea.**

Ever since the pioneering days of the Norwegian oil industry, ConocoPhillips' occupational health service has had an important emergency preparedness function. The service's assets include 24-hour crewed rescue helicopters for the benefit of everyone in this part of the North Sea. The missions carried out since the service was formalised over 30 years ago are innumerable.

Cooperation

"The Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) has enjoyed close, good cooperation with the SAR services on Ekofisk for many years. There is no doubt that it has contributed to saving many lives," says Stein Solberg, rescue inspector and operations manager at RCC Southern Norway at Sola.

The SAR service in ConocoPhillips is set up with two helicopters, one of which is stationed at the Ekofisk Complex, while the other one is on the Valhall field just a few minutes' flight further south.

Offshore medical supervisor Rolv Pettersen is one of the seven well-trained offshore nurses in the company who comprise the permanent crew on the helicopters which fly out in the event of an accident, injury or acute illness in the area around Ekofisk.

Robust

"We have two helicopters available at all times, and this makes us very robust," says Pettersen. In addition to anaesthesia-trained and specially trained nurses, the helicopters are staffed by two pilots, a rescue crew man/lift operator and mechanic – from the helicopter company CHC."

All told, ConocoPhillips has 24 permanently employed offshore nurses. The occupational health service is managed by the chief corporate medical officer at the offices in Tananger.

"I am proud of the high quality of the offshore health services," says medical director Tatjana Bergsland, and emphasises the importance of saving lives and ensuring offshore safety.

SAR preparedness has become more and more professionalised. Over the years, careful statistics of the missions have been kept. These figures show close to 100 ambulance and rescue assignments per year. About half of these concern personnel and incidents on ConocoPhillips' installations, but there are also many assignments for the operating companies BP and Talisman. The three companies work in close cooperation through the Southern Field Alliance regarding logistics services and emergency preparedness, among other things.

"It's more often to do with illness than accidents, and we're like an emergency communications centre," says Pettersen. In 2012, 28 missions were carried out for others than the three operating companies.

Assignments from RCC

Drilling rigs working in the area can subscribe to the service. Also, some assignments come in the form of requests from RCC in Sola for assistance to ships in the area. Generally, patients are taken to hospital in Stavanger, but other times they are taken to Esbjerg or Aberdeen.

"The service is carried out by professional crews and is an important resource in the area Norway is responsible for within search and rescue," emphasises Solberg at RCC and says that in the last year alone, the SAR helicopters have been used 15 times on behalf of the public SAR service.

Awarded a prize

Recently the Ekofisk SAR services were awarded ConocoPhillips' highest award – the Spirit award. In the citation, one of the things that is highlighted is the team's efforts during the evacuation of the Elgin platform in the UK sector in connection with a gas leak in March last year. The SAR helicopter from Ekofisk was first on the scene and evacuated 109 people to nearby installations.

"The award is a great recognition after over thirty years of saving lives and safeguarding health," concludes medical director Bergsland.