

# Oil and Gas Industry Leaders Target a Serious Problem That Affects Us All—Driving-Related Events

Derek Tate, SPE, Global Driving Manager, Schlumberger Oilfield Services

The International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (OGP) has taken a strong proactive step to reduce the greatest common cause of death and serious injury plaguing our industry—motor-vehicle crashes (**Fig. 1**). OGP members formed a task force to study the issue and develop a realistic way to address it. The group selected a process that is elegant in its simplicity, yet remarkably thorough. They reasoned that since the industry was already accustomed to following recommended practice (RP) in nearly every facet of its work, why would it not be willing to develop and apply RP in driving?

The work was encouraged by sobering statistics amassed by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, which jointly estimated that 1.2 million people are killed annually in road crashes, and another 50 million are injured. Trends show that these numbers could increase by 65% over the next 20 years unless there is some intervention. While rates in developed countries are expected to decline, those of low- to middle-income countries will erase the decline, and the trend is expected to be steeply upward. Task-force members reminded themselves that the oil and gas industry field force is very active in these at-risk countries.

The task force took the position that one of the best ways to minimize driving fatalities is to minimize the occurrence of vehicle crashes. The best way to minimize the occurrence of vehicle crashes is to address their causes in a comprehensive way. Accordingly, the RP covers a spectrum of control areas. The team strived to apply experience, common sense, and best practice in determining the content of the document. Measures both proactive and reactive were included—preventative and mitigating, respectively. While the requirement for driver training and skill assessment will help prevent a crash, the requirement for the wearing of seatbelts reduces the potential for injury should a crash happen.

Task-force members sought to create a product that, if applied across the industry, should result in a step change in journey management and a substantial reduction in transport-related incidents. What differentiates an RP from a guideline is that an RP should be formally put into the business and operating practices of the company adopting it, requiring the universe of their enterprise—that is, permanent and temporary employees, partners, contractors, and vendors—to be influenced to adopt the practice as well. It is a powerful and effective incentive. An RP also becomes something by which the industry is recognized by the general public, governments, and regulatory agencies.

## Content and Context—A Recipe for Success

Nine key elements address a spectrum spanning personal responsibility to management and organizational responsibility:

- **Seatbelt use:** Statistics in support of this practice are incontrovertible. Seatbelts maintain occupants in a vehicle and in a position to take advantage of the protection provided by the vehicle's superstructure and integrated safety features. Simply put, seatbelts make sense.
- **Training and qualifications:** Simply licensing drivers is not enough. The RP includes proactive measures such as defensive-driving training, alertness and fatigue management, periodic assessment of skills, commentary driving, teaching the effects of medication and substance abuse, and trip management.
- **Monitoring devices:** At-risk behavior is rarely recognized by the person exhibiting it. An objective method must be used to help drivers recognize their own bad practices and tendencies. Further, driving is a task that usually includes little or no supervision—you become aware of unacceptable behavior only after a crash. Vehicle monitoring and analysis provide a means to detect and measure



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*Since joining Schlumberger in 1976, Tate has served in various capacities, including management positions in the company's Quality, Health, Safety, and Environment Department. He has been involved in driver training and with driving issues since 1981 and has authored and coauthored multiple papers and articles on these subjects.*

# What is a breakthrough?

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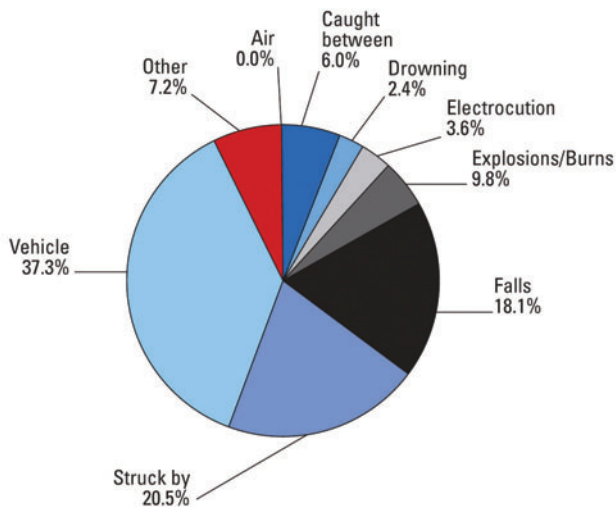
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**Fig. 1—Distribution of fatalities reported to OGP in 2005.**

performance in support of timely intervention and effective coaching.

- **Cell phones:** Statistics have proved conclusively that cell phones are distracting and increase the risk of an accident by a factor of four. They can even have a 10-minute residual attention-robbing effect as the driver reflects on the conversation after it is over.

- **Trip management:** Elimination of the risk is the most effective way to reduce incidents. Is the trip really necessary? If so, plans for necessary trips should include route-hazard awareness and periodic rest stops, and driver selection should be based on physical and mental condition as well as local experience.

- **Alcohol and drugs:** Given that driving is a complex psycho-motor skill, a driver must be totally cognizant of his or her driving environment, with the capacity to respond to changes in that environment at any given moment.

- **Driver fitness and alertness:** To be in control, a driver must be alert and physically capable of maneuvering the vehicle effectively. Drowsy driving has been identified as the highest common cause of single-vehicle crashes.

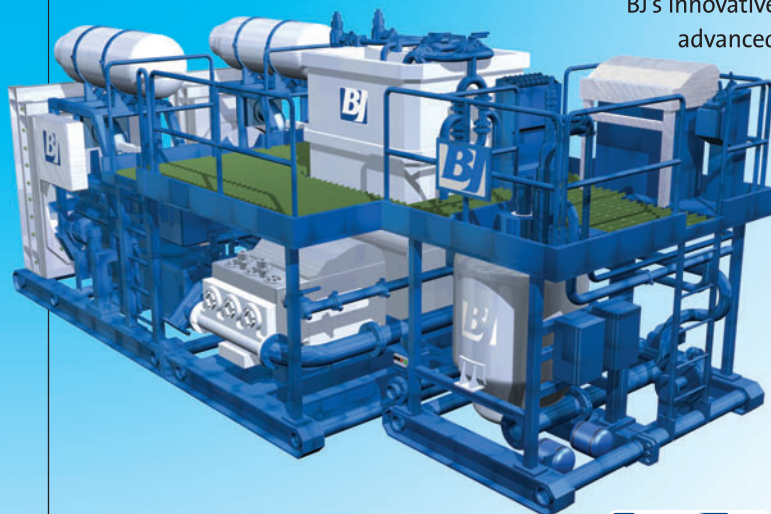
- **Fit-for-purpose vehicles:** Supplying and using a vehicle that is not suited for its operating environment are parts of a recipe for a crash.

- **Management systems:** Lack of management will prohibit or limit consistent implementation, and hence also realization of the full value and impact of the RP.

The industry can take justifiable pride in the development of this RP that addresses such a serious aspect of our daily activities, on or off the job, affecting us, our families, and our communities. We have the tool; we now need to ensure its effective implementation, both by ourselves and by our service providers. The target is full alignment with the RP by the end of 2008. Fatalities and other accidental loss from driving do not have to be a cost of doing business in the oil and gas industry. **JPT**

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