

## CHAPTER 2

### OFFSHORE SAFETY LEGISLATION, ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT—HISTORY AND PRESENT SITUATION

2.1. This Chapter describes the development of the Department of Energy's offshore safety legislation and the present division of responsibilities between Government Agencies concerned with offshore safety. It is based upon the evidence given by the Petroleum Engineering Division of the Department of Energy (37).

#### **The growth of safety controls**

2.2. A detailed list of the legislation relating to offshore safety is given in Appendix 5 and the principal instruments are reviewed in some detail in Appendix 6.

2.3. The first United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea was held in 1958, when it was agreed that coastal states have sovereign rights for the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of their continental shelves. The United Kingdom (UK) ratified the 1958 Convention and subsequently took the necessary powers to licence such exploitation in the Continental Shelf Act 1964. This Act applied the provisions of the Petroleum Production Act 1934 (which enabled licences to be granted and regulations to be made for the exploration and exploitation of petroleum on land) to the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS). Regulations were made under the 1934 and 1964 Acts giving model clauses for exploration and production licences and in 1964 the first licences for the development of the UKCS were issued. The model clauses concerning safety matters required licensees to:

- 2.3.1. obtain the consent of the Minister to the drilling or abandonment of a well;
- 2.3.2. execute all operations in accordance with good oilfield practice; and
- 2.3.3. comply with instructions given by the Minister relating to 2.3.2 on the safety, health and welfare of persons in the licensed area.

2.4. These provisions were designed to minimise the risks of a blow-out and to promote good operating practices aboard offshore installations. Several instructions were issued to licensees, one of which required compliance with the Institute of Petroleum Code of Safe Practice in the Petroleum Industry. Enforcement of these requirements was carried out by inspectors of the Ministry of Power. Instructions in this form are now no longer issued, because of the regulations made under the 1971 Act.

2.5. In the early years the risks of operating in such a hostile environment as the North Sea were largely unknown, but accidents were investigated and analysed. These investigations led to the conclusion that detailed safety regulations should be made under the authority of a new Act specifically designed to cater for offshore safety matters. The new Act—the Mineral Workings (Offshore