

ENERGY MATTERS

Cities At Sea Supply U.S.

(NAPSA)—Imagine thousands of floating cities in the middle of the ocean, manned by people and robots.

It may sound like the stuff of science fiction, but these “cities” are actually at-sea oil platforms that serve as temporary homes to about 1.5 million people today.

They play a key role in providing energy to the U.S., and—from robotic submarines to high-tech solutions to seasickness—engineers have found ways to make them more efficient and comfortable for workers. Here’s a closer look at life on a platform:

Cities At Sea

About 1,000 people are employed on each of the 2,800 oil platforms spread along the U.S. coastline and in the Gulf of Mexico. The crews live in cabins and can visit a variety of leisure facilities, including a billiards room and various shops, to make day-to-day living more like it is on shore.

Still, work on an oil platform is often dirty, hard and sometimes dangerous, with fires, explosions and high seas representing a constant risk. Additionally, the crew must cope with isolation from the outside world.

Making Life Easier

Occasionally, a helicopter lands with provisions and spare parts, but increasingly many platforms now have Platform Supply Vessels (PSVs), which tow solid cargo stowed on their decks. Fitted with special tanks, the ships can also carry volatile liquid cargo, such as methanol needed for drilling work. Additionally, the PSVs allow



Thousands of floating oil platforms are temporary homes to more than 1 million workers.

for launching robotic repair submarines and can be used to bring drilling mud and waste from the oil platforms back to shore.

Safer Seas

Some new Platform Supply Vessels will be equipped with Voith Schneider Propellers. The propellers supply a high degree of maneuverability, which reduces the risk of collision when unloading PSVs during high seas.

Also important for the crew is that the propellers reduce 80 to 90 percent of a vessel’s “rolling motion.” Rolling motions are ship movements that result in fast acceleration of a ship. They impair the safety of working on deck and sometimes cause seasickness even among experienced crewmen.

Combined with technologies that allow for rough-weather repair—as well as for some of the creature comforts of home—the propellers are helping to keep crews safe and at-sea oil platforms shipshape.

For more information, visit www.voithturbo.com.