



ASSOCIATION OF SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL OFFICERS

Registered with the Registrar of Societies Uttarakhand Govt., Registration No. 172 (1967-68)

OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION LTD.

Room No. 2016, 2nd Floor, Tower-A, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070

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CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE

No. ASTO/CWC/TaukTae/2018-21/25

02.06.2021

To
Chairman & Managing Director
Deendayal Urja Bhawan,
5-A, Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj,
New Delhi – 110070

Sub: Incidents due to impact of Cyclone TaukTae at Mumbai offshore

Respected Sir,

This is with reference to unfortunate incident of 17th May 2021 when due to impact of Cyclone TaukTae, 86 Brave Nature Victims lives were lost in the Arabian Sea. ASTO pays condolences to the Brave Nature Victims and pray for their families to overcome this irreparable loss. 188 lives could be saved due to herculean efforts put in by Indian Navy, Coast Guard and ONGC. On this incident we would like to bring to your notice following facts:

1. The unprecedented severity of TaukTae impacted 3 Barges which broke away from their anchors and tugs: Papaa-305, SS-03, Gal Constructor, and Drilling Rig – Sagar Bhushan. These vessels had started drifting along with the direction of current. All were brought under control except Papaa-305 which capsized after hitting an unmanned platform HC, Varaprada which sank and Gal Constructor which hit coast somewhere near Palghar.
2. On 17/05/2021 the severity of storm was significantly higher and the path of storm has shifted significantly. As against the initial storm information of 85-90 knots wind speed, received on 14/05/2021 the actual impact was much higher at 105-110 knots. The cyclone also moved eastwards in western offshore area by about 60-70 nautical miles (110 to 130 km) with respect to the initial path forecast, thus affecting more installations.
3. ONGC as per procedure transmitted the weather alerts as well as advisory for ensuring safety to all process installations, drilling Rigs, vessels, and construction barges working in the field well in time. All the operational areas ensured the same except the construction barge Papaa-305 chartered and operated by M/s AFCONS. M/s AFCONS not only failed to adhere to the weather warnings but also put the personnel of the barge at risk by not moving out to harbour as other 21 barges did in order to reduce the risk.
4. It is statutory requirement of DG Shipping that each vessel operating in high seas has a system of taking weather warnings from their established sources and Captain of the ship is the ultimate authority to decide on the further course of action to be taken.
5. It is a known fact that the Chief engineer of the barge has complained against the Captain of the barge and M/s AFCONS for not ensuring adherence to the weather warnings given by ONGC. The FIR of the said complaint with Mumbai Police is evidence to the same.
6. The fact is that there were 22 barges working for ONGC during that period and 19 of them adhered to ONGC weather advisory but the three barges belonging to M/s



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AFCONS did not. M/s AFCONS failed to adhere to the requirements of Marine Operations manual, bridging documents, warnings issued by ONGC. They also gave false information to ONGC that they have taken adequate precaution as per ONGC's advisory. It is not a co-incident that all three barges belong to M/s AFCONS because this company time and again has violated safety and human rights norms and has scant respect for ONGC's safe practices.

7. ONGC provided all the required support after mishap (Rescue, rehabilitation, Stay, transportation, post-mortem etc.) to the affected personnel & their family members and announced ₹ 1 lakh relief for each of the survivors and ₹ 2 lakh each for families of those who died or are still missing. However, the contractor company M/s AFCONS was found missing throughout this relief process.
8. The worst part is that even after such a tragedy, M/s AFCONS did not take timely action for various warnings issued by ONGC for impending Oil leakage at their barge GAL Constructor where there were chances of Oil Spill. Though the warnings were issued on 19th May 2021, M/s AFCONS took action only after 25th May 2021 till that time nearly 1KL of lube oil had already leaked into the sea.
9. The statement given by master of GAL Constructor to the High Level Committee conducting inquiry further confirms that they were instructed by M/s Afcons to stay back in Mumbai High and when GAL Constructor dropped the anchor and towed with tugboat Varaprada to get entry to Mumbai Port Trust on 16th May, they were not allowed as payment for the same had not been made by M/s AFCONS. A criminal lapse on part of M/s AFCONS.
10. It seems that ONGC has initiated disciplinary actions against few of our senior officers while the process of inquiry is on. The contractor M/s AFCONS who is the major offender in this case has so far gone scot free.
11. While the process of inquiry is on action against ONGC officials prima facie seems motivated and to divert attention from contractor. The unjustified disciplinary action will adversely affect the moral of ONGC employees who have continued field operation and production in adverse conditions during this pandemic by braving many challenges, not to mention that said action at the present moment has been enacted without following the due procedure as established by law, without giving a fair hearing to said persons, and has been taken in absence of any concrete and cogent proof of violation of policy/practice.
12. Questions are being raised that why no notice has been issued against M/s AFCONS so far though they have clearly violated the safety norms & human rights and why no criminal case has been filed against them?

In light of above facts, ASTO demands that following actions be taken immediately:

1. Withdraw the disciplinary actions initiated against few officers of ONGC as they are not based on any outcome of factual inquiry. In case the inquiry establishes any lapses on part of any of the ONGC officers who so ever they are, then ASTO demands action be taken against such officers but based on free and fair inquiry process and on establishing the facts.
2. Initiate actions against the contractor M/s AFCONS and their partners as their culpability is clearly established in failure to adhere to the weather warnings given by ONGC and giving false compliance of the same to ONGC.



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3. Debar M/s AFCONS and their partners from further work in ONGC with immediate effect and criminal proceedings be initiated against M/s AFCONS.
4. Penalize M/s AFCONS for their failure to take timely action to avoid the Oil Spill that has happened on the beaches somewhere near Palghar.

We therefore request you to take immediate action on ASTO's demands. In case the same is not done by 15th June 2021, then ASTO shall be constrained to take further action in this regard.

With warm Regards

(Amit Kumar)
President-CWC

(S K Chaturvedi)
Gen. Secretary-CWC

(A K Sinha)
President-Ankleshwar

(P N Pathak)
President-Mumbai

(S S Mayal)
President-Agartala

(Ajay S Rawat)
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(Sanjay Varshney)
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(D S Bhatnagar)
Vice-President-Delhi

(Mahesh Pareek)
Secretary-Delhi

(Anuj Kumar Goyal)
Joint Secretary-Delhi

(A K Shukla)
Secretary-Vadodara

(Ashutosh Verma)
Secretary-Dehradun

(Ashish Chauhan)
Joint Secretary-Dehradun

(Varun Khandelwal)
Joint Secretary-Offshore

Copy to:

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2. Chief ER, New Delhi
3. President/Secretary All ASTO Units