



What is a Trade Association?

What does IMCA do?

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IMCA is the international trade association representing offshore, marine and underwater engineering companies

It seeks to:

- strive for the highest possible standards with a balance of risk and cost in: health and safety; technology; quality and efficiency; environmental awareness and protection;
- achieve and sustain self-regulation in the industry;
- ease the free movement of equipment and personnel globally;
- achieve equitable contracting regimes;
- provide the framework for training, certification, competence and recruitment to support and sustain the industry globally;
- resolve industry issues; and
- promote co-operation across the industry.

Members include pipelay, heavy lift, diving, remotely operated vehicle, survey and offshore construction contractors, plus various contractors operating specialist marine equipment.

IMCA has two core activities in which all members participate:

- Competence & Training includes a comprehensive framework devoted to promoting safety by defining and encouraging training and competence in key safety-related positions.
- Safety, Environment & Legislation (SEL) includes monitoring national and international regulatory bodies, circulation of relevant information to members and advancement of industry positions where necessary

Members join in one or more technical divisions relevant to their own activities:

- Diving
- Marine
- Offshore Survey
- Remote Systems & ROV

IMCA works with a global focus, but also has regional sections covering the key offshore areas: Asia-Pacific, Central & North America, Europe & Africa, Middle East & India and South America.

IMCA has published substantial and comprehensive good practice guidance on marine operations based on its members' experience in a range of related areas. More details on specific activities are set out on these factsheets.

International Marine
Contractors Association

www.imca-int.com

What Are They? What Do They Do?

Trade associations are formed from a membership of companies operating in a particular area of industry and exist for their benefit. They can promote common interests and improvements in quality, health, safety, environmental and technical standards. This can be through various appropriate means. For example, the publication of guidelines, information notes, codes of practice, and regular briefing notes on technical issues and regulatory developments. Sharing of good practice can be facilitated together with provision of news and events appropriate to their members' areas of activity.

There can also be meetings, workshops and seminars, held, depending on an association's membership, both internationally and at a national/regional level, to enable networking and the exchange of information and ideas, for example on technical and safety issues.

Safety is of prime importance in any industry and there is usually a way of publicising and circulating safety messages to the members on a regular basis.

An association can provide a forum for discussion of non-competitive information, resolve industry wide issues and act as a research centre.

Relevant regulatory developments can be followed in areas where members operate, both at national and international level, and an association can represent its members' interests in discussions with regulatory bodies, become involved in consultation exercises and provide direct input on those and other matters where necessary.

Membership of a trade association is generally available to companies and organisations active in the relevant industry. It will usually be by application, a process of acceptance and payment of a fee. Trade associations are non-profit-making and the fees are intended to cover the necessary expenses of operation.

Membership of a reputable trade association is usually an asset to a business because it defines an area in which a company operates and the common existing knowledge base, in addition to the direct benefits it receives by way of services and new documentation.

Strict rules apply to the operation of trade associations, for instance compliance with competition law policy. Associations have to create an internal structure of procedures to ensure that such rules are properly observed.

How Do They Work?

The work of a trade association is accomplished through committees of experts drawn from member companies and through its secretariat. The secretariat is likely to organise the committees, attend other industry groups, provide information on a range of issues to members and probably publish useful notes and guidelines. It can also organise seminars and meetings of workgroups.



- ☑ has a membership of marine contractors, large and small, operating internationally, together with their supplier companies, with a 'corresponding' membership category available to clients and regulatory bodies;
- ☑ promotes good practice by developing and promoting guidance documents based on members' cumulative experience world-wide;
- ☑ enables the sharing of safety-related information between members, helping to raise offshore safety standards towards a 'zero injury' goal;
 - A 'safety flash' system to pass on lessons learned from offshore incidents
 - Regular safety-focused seminars and workshops to share good practice and ideas
 - Annual collection and reporting of safety statistics
- ☑ monitors national and international legislation and other industry developments likely to affect members' businesses, providing briefing and using expert input from members to successfully lobby regulators and other key decision makers on their behalf;
- ☑ liaises with client bodies and other third party organisations to promote members' interests and pass on the expertise available in member companies;
- ☑ is managed by committees and officers elected from senior experts representing member companies, supported by a London-based secretariat.



Self-Regulation

Trade associations do not regulate in the way that legislators do. They provide guidance to members and work to update and introduce new guidelines wherever there appears to be a need. Members working to those guidelines is a way of 'self-regulating', rather than looking to clients or governments for regulation. Self regulation is the logical result of action by industry participants to address a number of concerns.

Governments provide a basic structure of legislation to deal with a range of issues in the public interest. There is not, in any pragmatic sense, time for a government to produce detailed legislation for every part of an industry's operations. Some parts are, in any event, not ideal for legislative control. For example, the safe operation of a vessel is legislated for, but the detail of how, for instance, dynamic positioning operations are undertaken on all of the wide variety of vessel types would be beyond ordinary legislation.

Self regulation is also far easier to implement quickly and to change than legislation and with technology advancing rapidly this flexibility can be a vital benefit.

Governments, international bodies and members' clients can and do rely on self-regulatory groups for providing a structure for legislation to build on when a need is found. They are content for industries to self-regulate, not only because it assists them, but, it could be said, it also provides someone to shift responsibility upon should they perceive the need! This encourages trade associations to ensure that their guidance is a proper reflection of good practice in their industry.

Self-regulation improves the conduct of an industry and helps drive out unsafe practices together with those who use them. If self-regulation is effective, well used and well known, it becomes a promotional tool for those who can advertise that they conform to it.

Litigation is all around us every day and it has been shown to be more vital than ever for a company to be able to prove to a court that it has a competent workforce, an effective means of ensuring continuing competency, and a system of safe operation of its vessels and plant in compliance with the industry's accepted standards of good practice. Conforming to safe practices that are accepted by the industry and that are being constantly monitored by a reputable trade association goes a long way towards achieving that.

Achieving and sustaining self-regulation is one of IMCA's key objectives.

Key IMCA guidance documents used on a world-wide basis:

- ◆ IMCA guidance on competence assurance & assessment
- ◆ Guidelines for the design and operation of dynamically positioned vessels
- ◆ Common marine inspection document
- ◆ IMCA international code of practice for offshore diving
- ◆ Code of practice for the safe and efficient operation of remotely operated vehicles
- ◆ Guidance on the initial and refresher familiarisation of vessel crews
- ◆ Basic safety training and vessel induction for non-marine personnel working offshore

Visit our website at www.imca-int.com to find out more about what IMCA does as the international trade association representing offshore, marine and underwater engineering companies.