

## ITS EXHIBITORS

# Communications reaching new heights at lower cost

With their unique infrastructure requirements, oilfields function akin to a small community. The communication processes inherently demand secure and efficient technology with oilfields heavily dependent on well-organised logistics supported by OSVs, each employing anywhere between 20 and 100 crew.

Satellite technology serves more than 13,700 vessels and mobile drilling units as well as 8,000 fixed platforms worldwide on a daily basis. Even as demand for VSAT has been increasing, mobile satellite services

(MSS) terminals remain the backbone for offshore communications primarily due to cost-effective voice services and serving as reliable back-up.

The new MSS terminals, such as Thuraya MarineStar, launched late last year, offer a new set of capabilities that serve to optimise oilfield operations. Not only does a GPS tracker provide increased visibility over OSVs, real-time communications support the timely delivery of key decisions and serve to enhance the efficiency of logistics and co-ordination for an entire oilfield.

prevent a major technical breakdown, and eliminate potential risks to the crew's wellbeing."

With the changing business environment, fluctuating oil prices, and downturn in demand for oil products due to global health risks such as those posed by Covid-19, the oil companies are increasingly focusing on cost optimisation and increasing operational efficiency. Fixed voice terminals on OSVs significantly contribute to this process and enable the optimal use of fleets by being easily scalable.

Besides, fixed MSS terminals can be used as a public phone service with voice credits available to crew members on e-vouchers or scratch cards. Not only does satcom empower crew welfare, higher morale and operational performance, it is also a major consideration for talent attraction and retention. A communication welfare programme is a significant factor for crew when choosing to join or continuing to stay with an organisation. Robust satcom links are simply an integral component of offshore communications today.

Nabil Ben Soussia, VP maritime at IEC Telecom Group, said: "Reaching the crew at any time is immensely important when operating offshore. Satellite handsets are not 100 per cent reliable and can even be left unattended or somewhere with a weak network signal.

"In times of emergencies, strong communication links become even more paramount. Fixed terminals enable the timely exchange of critical data that allows managers to identify any unusual situation that may require the activation of safety measures,



► *Nabil Ben Soussia, VP maritime at IEC Telecom Group*