

New Waves in Workboats: Combined Control and Monitoring

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Abstract

With budgets getting tighter and offshore support companies looking for methods to get more out of their investments, workboats are being rapidly enhanced with new technology. Integrated control and monitoring systems, long reserved for larger vessels, are now emerging as the latest opportunity for not only money savings but also safer operations. Through improved modular approaches based on new technology, these systems are affordable and provide substantial improvements in vessel operation including reduced manning requirements and, one of the newest areas for workboats, Condition Based Monitoring. This reduces maintenance downtime by monitoring the status of critical systems and reduces failures by predicting the remaining "life" of equipment. In addition, these systems further reduce the vessel manning requirements through automated monitoring. These systems can provide benefits to virtually all of the workboat community from simple supply vessels to seismic survey and well stimulation vessels. This paper presents a short review of the technology used on larger ships and then a scaled-down system for use on smaller vessels. Then some of the compelling reasons to introduce integrated control and monitoring systems onto workboats are discussed. In addition, it details the layout of a typical system noting the new technologies making it easy and affordable to implement these systems on smaller vessels. It concludes with summaries resulting from current systems in use and present opportunities for further enhancements directed at the workboat market based on industry observation and field experience.

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