

ROVs

IMCA receives a number of requests from people enquiring about a career working offshore with remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). The purpose of this document is to try to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

Members of IMCA Remote Systems & ROV Division are generally involved in the use or manufacture of remotely operated vehicles, underwater robot vehicles connected to a mother ship by some form of umbilical. Such vehicles are widely used for a broad range of activities, in many cases instead of divers. Some of their uses are: inspection and monitoring of underwater equipment; operation and maintenance of valves and other moving parts on subsea manifolds; trenching for submarine cables and pipelines; video observation of divers and inspection of underwater equipment and pipelines.



ROVs are being used at greater and greater depths, far beyond that at which divers may operate. Some of our members have ROV equipment for use at 3000m below sea level. All ROVs are very complex pieces of equipment, often weighing several tons when out of water and considerable technological and engineering challenges are involved in operating them.

Education and Qualifications Required

Employers normally require ROV personnel to have a good background in electronics or hydraulics. Experience with pneumatics, plant maintenance or electrical or mechanical engineering may also be of interest to prospective employers. Candidates who do not have formal qualifications (academic, trade or in the armed forces) in one of these areas are unlikely to be considered.



Skills and Training Required

Generally there are no statutory requirements for ROV personnel to have particular qualifications. However, IMCA has published guidance entitled "Entry level requirements and basic introductory course for remotely operated vehicle (ROV) personnel" (IMCA R 002, as revised) which may be regarded as an appropriate minimum standard.

Training courses are available at a number of schools which allow newcomers to the industry to learn the basics and hopefully to comply with at least IMCA R 002. However, none of these courses is formally required as a prerequisite by any employers, and they will normally not be accepted as a basis for employment unless the person has the sort of background and qualifications described above.

Many of the larger ROV contractors train personnel in-house, allowing them to focus training on a particular area of commercial interest. A number of independent training establishments offer more general or other specialised training.

To work offshore in any capacity it is usually necessary to complete a basic offshore safety induction and emergency training (BOSIET) course. This generally includes first aid, safety at sea, the basics of fire and fire fighting and helicopter underwater escape training (HUET). In many regions, someone who has not successfully completed a course of this nature will not be permitted to work offshore.

Medical Fitness

In many areas of the world, potential offshore workers must undergo and pass a special medical examination. These requirements may vary from country to country, but usually involve a medical leading to a certificate which may be valid for one or more years. The requirements are not unduly onerous for fit and active people but certain common conditions, or previous injuries, can be a cause for failure. If in any doubt, interested persons should seek out a doctor knowledgeable about offshore standards before they seek work or embark on a course of training.

Working Conditions and Prospects

Most ROV personnel are employed directly by one of the ROV operators or contractors. ROV work is normally constant around the year and is less 'seasonal' than diving. ROV personnel can expect to travel overseas. They have to be resourceful, resilient and be able to work in a team environment.

Further Information

There is no world-wide approval system for training providers, but we would suggest that you contact members of IMCA's Remote Systems & ROV Division for details on the training they require or provide.

See our website at www.imca-int.com/members for the full listing and links to a number of such companies.