

Data Processor

July 2006

Modern day offshore survey operations rely on the collection of high volume data sets. These come from multiple sensors in digital and analogue format, and require the services of data processors who will edit, clean, collate, interpret and integrate the data. The data processor then needs to present the results in graphical, chart, database, report and multimedia formats. This processing and reporting work is generally performed alongside data acquisition operations in an offshore environment.

The survey data processor is involved with every aspect of offshore data. This includes measuring currents, tides and waves, observing the ocean environment, integrity management of offshore assets, mapping the ocean floor and exploring for the minerals that lie beneath. Survey data processors are involved in:

- ◆ exploration/seismic survey
- ◆ port and harbour authority activities
- ◆ dredging and coastal engineering operations
- ◆ charting of the seas and oceans
- ◆ offshore/near shore construction
- ◆ trans-oceanic telecommunication cable installation
- ◆ ocean research
- ◆ lakes and inland waterway surveys
- ◆ environmental studies
- ◆ offshore pipeline inspection surveys

Processing, charting and reporting tasks are performed using state of the art equipment and computer programs such as CAD, database software, 3D processing and visualisation software, web-based technology and statistical analysis tools.

Education and Qualifications Required

The minimum entry-level qualifications for a survey data processor to IMCA member companies are a technical college qualification in a survey, science/information technology, engineering subject or cartographic discipline.

Skills and Training Required

A survey data processor requires many skills. All offshore survey contractors offer in-house courses and 'on the job' training to provide the specific technical and human skill sets required to perform processing and reporting duties. Other important skills required are computer literacy and the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and through the written word.

Ongoing training and assessment of offshore personnel has been enhanced with the introduction of the IMCA guidance on competence assurance and assessment that was launched in January 1999. The scheme sets out competence criteria for specific roles in the offshore construction industry. These roles include:

- ◆ Data Processor Grade II
- ◆ Data Processor Grade I
- ◆ Senior Data Processor
- ◆ Party Chief

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

Survey data processors can expect to travel overseas. They have to be resourceful, resilient and be able to work in both a team and a remote environment. Most work is vessel based; however, there are ample opportunities for on-shore and office based duties.

After 5-7 years field experience it is possible for a survey data processor to become a party chief (supervisor of a multi-disciplined offshore team). After several years offshore experience, many move into managerial and technical support roles onshore. Prospects for moving up through the ranks are good and, for the ambitious, there is no limit to what can be achieved.

Further Information

For a list of educational establishments, including details of entry qualifications, visit

www.imca-int.com/divisions/survey/profile/personnel/training/

For contact details of offshore survey contractors in IMCA membership contact IMCA or visit

www.imca-int.com/members/survey.html