

A WIN FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Enhancing the immersion suit experience for women who work offshore



Customer: Shell

Supplier: Survitec

Industry: Offshore energy

Region: North Sea

Operation type: Offshore transfer via helicopter

Survival Technology: 1000S Passenger Immersion Suit

The challenge

In 2019, Shell launched its DE&I in Operations Initiative to address any potential gaps across its offshore and onshore work sites. As part of this initiative, Shell conducted an insights survey in 2022 to better understand the current immersion suit experience for those travelling offshore. This followed anecdotal comments made about the fit of immersion suits, and what this meant in practice for women in a male-dominated and male-created environment. The challenge was to address the issue of immersion suit fit for all genders and body types.

What was discovered

Findings indicated people of all heights and genders have previously not been able to find a suit that fits first time. With women being 27% more likely to experience this. The most common area of improvement, as reported by 25% of respondents, was finding a suit with a suitably fitting neck and wrist seals that also fits the body in terms of height and width. Additionally, the survey revealed that changing immersion suits, potentially multiple times in front of other passengers, can create uncomfortable scenarios.

Recognising the importance of cultivating an inclusive work culture where all colleagues feel valued and equipped to succeed in their roles, Shell partnered with Survitec to overcome this challenge.

Breaking workplace barriers and winning awards

The Offshore Energy UK (OEUK) and Offshore Achievement Awards (OAA) have both recognised this project, with the latter presenting it with the esteemed Diversity and Inclusion Award.

The solution – what was achieved

Based on the survey results, Survitec set out to improve the immersion suit experience for all. The solution involved a thorough review of the physical product and also the processes that surround receiving an immersion suit. The key outcomes included adjustments of the sizing and seals, increasing readily available sizes by 30%. This modular design means any size of suit can be fitted with any size of wrist and neck seals.

In addition, pre-flight fitting is offered as standard. This is perfect for those who have not travelled offshore before, or for anyone with a physical disability who may need a bespoke alteration. These bespoke suits are stored for the individual when not in use and issued in the same way as all other suits at the heliport.

The benefits – what is the value

The adoption of a systematic and inclusive approach to immersion suit fitting brings numerous productivity benefits to the table.

Firstly, it reduces the time spent on finding and fitting the right immersion suits, which ultimately leads to fewer delays and a smoother, more comfortable journey offshore. This translates into more productive use of time, enabling colleagues to focus on the jobs they're there to do.

Furthermore, the implementation of a more inclusive product and process is designed to remove any apprehension colleagues may have felt previously about their gender or body shape affecting the fit of their suit.



