

Study: Cancer rate higher in oilmen

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Cancer in an offshore perspective has been a topic of interest in the Petroleum Safety Authority Norway's Safety Forum for several years. A lengthy and laborious task was carried out from 1989 to 1996 to get a study in place. The researchers have dug through registers in the companies and in the unions to find relevant names of persons who have had work offshore of a certain duration. A study group (28,000 persons) was established in 1998/1999 based on the responses to questionnaires. The group is being monitored over time by the University of Bergen (UiB), which has played a key role in the work on the cancer issue.

The Cancer Registry of Norway has conducted a simple census from 1999 to the present. In a limited study, Stami (National Institute of Occupational Health) has examined mortality among offshore workers, e.g. as a consequence of cancer illnesses.

A summary made by the Cancer Registry says e.g. the following: "preliminary calculations show that the total incidence of cancer among offshore workers does not deviate much from what we would have expected in relation to the general population. However, we see a heightened risk of acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) and cancer in the pleura (pleura, normally mesoteliomy)."

The AID has sent the Cancer Registry's report with proposed follow-up activities to the Research Council, with a request that the Council evaluate the report in relation to financing through the Petromaks program.

The PSA director, who also leads the Safety Forum, concluded that the companies must ensure that they have control over potential exposure to benzene and other possible causes of work-related cancer. This problem area will be followed up by the Safety Forum in connection with natural milestones.

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