



# Christmas offshore on Maui A Platform

Christmas Day for all those working on the Maui A Platform off the Taranaki coast is a relaxed affair with plenty of good food. Helicopter pilots with big white beards and red hats usually make a special delivery with all the holiday season's goodies just before December 25 and on the day the caterers present fabulous Yuletide fare.

"Christmas and Boxing Days are catered by the normal contract caterers who do a fantastic job, taking great pride in their meals. It probably gives them the opportunity to show off a little and produce that something special that normally they may not. Albeit, the normal meals are never wanting," says STOS operations excellence co-ordinator Paul O'Dowd.

Paul has worked for Shell Todd Oil Services Limited (STOS) for 25 years, at the Kapuni and Maui fields in New Zealand, as well as in Syria. He now works in the New Plymouth office in production services.

He was the Person-in-Charge on both the Maui A and B Platforms for about seven years and has spent a number of Christmases offshore. "Pretty relaxed, a fun day", is how he sums it up. "Essential work is completed and the process is continually monitored to maintain normal safe operating parameters."

While many of us are used to calling them 'rigs', these structures are actually correctly known as platforms for producing natural gas and condensate (light oil).

In 1969 the offshore Maui field was discovered and in 1979 first gas was commissioned. It consists of the 20,000 tonne Maui A platform and the unmanned satellite Maui B platform. Gas and condensate is piped back to the onshore Maui Production station via a sub-sea

pipeline for processing. STOS operates this facility.

The normal offshore roster for those working on the platform is 14 days onboard, working 12 hours a day, followed by 14 days off. Usually a staff of between 10 and 15 are on for Christmas Day. This comprises the Operations Team, catering staff and possibly some maintenance staff.

"Staff know what the yearly roster is and have the opportunity to book leave over Christmas well in advance. Providing cover is available or their position is not a safety-critical role, then usually most people can be accommodated. Generally, if you are onboard over Christmas, you usually have New Year off," Paul explains.

The platform has a galley with all the modern commercial-type appliances you would expect. It provides meals and snacks for up to 45 people on a 24-hour basis. A contract catering company provides all the food requirements. A scheduled supply vessel sails (fortnightly) from New Plymouth to the platform to deliver food containers of both dry and frozen goods. This is supplemented by a weekly helicopter flight to bring out

fresh vegetables, fruit, milk and other such items.

The menu for Christmas Day is carefully written in French and beautifully presented. The food selection is superb, with a typical menu including shrimp cocktail as an appetiser, followed by soup, an entrée of avocado and smoked salmon, while the mains include turkey with cranberry sauce, ham on the bone and baked eye fillet steak. Vegetables on offer include carrots, peas and minted potatoes and the meal is finished off with a bevy of sweets including steamed fruit pudding with brandy sauce, gateau au chocolat, chocolate mints, Christmas cake, assorted nuts and assorted toffees. Grape juice (both still and sparkling) is the beverage offered.

Christmas Day for those on duty on Maui A has most of the celebratory ingredients, including a Christmas tree and decorations in the dining room and lounge, while presents are not overlooked. "Usually there is a Secret Santa deal with gifts or something similar", says Paul. Staff can also ring home and they have access to email for Christmas messages.

— **By Robyn Yousef**