

AFM Case Study



There when it matters ASCO's round the clock response

Recent events in the Gulf of Mexico have attracted worldwide media attention. BP has been in the firing line from the media, politicians, local communities and many in the industry after the Deep Water Horizon tragedy. Even the US President became embroiled in the crisis.

It has been described as the world's worst oil spill, and remembering that 11 people lost their lives, there is little doubt that it has been a landmark event in the history of oil and gas exploration. Behind the scenes and the headlines, however, many hundreds of people have been playing their part in trying to respond to the disaster. BP, the Federal Government and its agencies, partners, contractors and local communities across the wide outreach of the Gulf, have been working tirelessly in response to the catastrophe.

ASCO has also played its part through its global freight management operation AFM. On a recent visit to Houston, David Wallace ASCO's Group Head of Communications, met some of the AFM team that continue to play a significant role in the clean-up operation. "This has been a game changer for us – a truly global response". It's easy to see the impact this crisis has had on Rick Higgins, President of ASCO Freight Management.

Enscorced in his office in Houston, Rick is running the day to day operations at AFM, but acting as the close liaison with his eight-man team who are embedded at BP's Houston Crisis Management Centre.

"The response from the AFM team has been truly magnificent" Rick continued. "It's not only the team here, but our colleagues in Aberdeen and Singapore have worked around the clock to ensure our response has been truly global".

Rick explained some of the challenges, "Right from the start of this crisis, we were brought in as the lead logistics partner. I think that's testament to the work we've been doing for BP over the past 8 years here – they trusted us. We've been moving people, equipment – anything that is critical as part of this response – we've moved it."

Being part of the front-line emergency response team has also meant that the ASCO team are working to the highest levels of BP Management. "It's been great that we've been given full and complete access to BP at Vice-President level. That means we are part of the high-level planning team and get involved, and more importantly influence the key decisions being made.

Having operations around the globe has also been a major factor in ASCO being able to respond effectively. Rick explained, "We're having to source materials from all over the world including the Far East. Our outreach operations in Singapore and Aberdeen have been key in allowing us to deliver materials for BP from all over the world - on time and on budget. I get calls from our guys in Aberdeen at 3am their time to discuss any issues. It just demonstrates the commitment



that people around the Group are willing to make in times of real difficulty for customers".

As lead contractor, AFM also has to co-ordinate other logistics partners across the Gulf Coast. "Based in the crisis hub, we have the big picture of where people and equipment have to be and when. We then co-ordinate the operations of other logistics partners as regards local delivery, which meets the requirements agreed centrally at the BP Emergency Centre – it works really well as there is no confusion about where the instructions are coming from and who has primacy in terms of decision making".

So just who are the AFM people involved?

"We have Mike Higgins, Brian Colhoun, Alan Finney, Steve Colhoun, Elgie Edge and Gary Morris. These guys are full-time on this work. Richard Singer and Ed Arnott in Aberdeen as well as Neil Johnson and his team in Singapore. In addition, we have a whole bunch of people at AFM base in Houston who are supporting that team in the Emergency Centre".

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Mike Jones of BP said, "ASCO has done a first class job in both global freight forwarding and all aspects of logistics. We have moved freight from the UK, Europe, Brazil and Angola, plus numerous shipments within the US. Many of these shipments have been large and complex, requiring solid knowledge of what is possible and safe to execute. ASCO have chartered vessels and aircraft, arranged pre-clearance with US customs to avoid delays to critical material and we have experienced zero project hold-ups due to effective handling of logistics – they have consistently pulled rabbits from hats"



John Jordan, CEO Americas said, "To say I'm proud of the team is probably an understatement. Having recently joined ASCO this has given me a real eye-opener in terms of the dedication and commitment these guys demonstrate around the clock – and around the clock is no exaggeration!"

"This whole experience has been bittersweet" Rick said. "It's been both a challenging and highly rewarding experience. To be involved in an event like this and really feel you have made some sort of contribution is very satisfying.

"Having said that, I often think of the 11 men who perished in this terrible incident, and the effects this disaster has had on local communities and their environment. It does bring you back to earth and remind me of why we're here – to try and make a terrible situation better.



"BP has come under immense pressure, however, we've seen first-hand the emotional and professional investment its people have been putting into this crisis – despite everything that has been said, they are trying to do the right thing.

"I guess that's all any of us can ask of ourselves".

