PacTow: Providing safe marine services

HOME grown company Pacific Towing (PacTow), is not only the marine services market leader in Papua New Guinea but also broader Melanesia. For nearly 50 years PacTow has been providing excellent, reliable, and safe services to clients across a broad range of industries.

Not only does PacTow's team of 250 plus staff work as safely as possible, but they also deliver services that look after the safety of other seafarers, our communities, and our environment.

Working safely

PacTow draws upon nearly 50 years of maritime safety experience. There's nothing more important at PacTow than working safely. Manager Gerard Kasnar is emphatic when he says: "The safety of not just our own employees but those of our contractors and business partners too, is a value which will not be compromised."

Safety training

Rigorous, comprehensive training programmes are central to ensuring the safest possible work environments at PacTow. The company invests heavily in the training of all staff whether they work at sea on the company's 20-vessel fleet, or onshore at one of six different ports. PacTow's seafarers, almost half of the company's workforce, are amongst the most experienced and well trained in PNG. Many of PacTow's Masters and Senior Engineers have trained and worked internationally, as well as in PNG.

"Employee training and development underpins continuous improvement in safety and in risk management throughout our workplaces, operations, and processes," HSSEQ manager Richard Hayka said.

"We believe that there's no such thing as 'too much safety' and we're always looking at how we can do safety better."

PacTow staff are well trained in both their actual job as well as the industry specific safety requirements of its clients (including its O&G and mining clients). The company's focus on safety extends beyond its own organisation to collaborative programmes with contractors, clients and business partners.

Safety certifications

PacTow is ISO 45001 (OH&S) certified. It also holds ISO 9001 (Quality) and ISO 14001 (Environment) certification. Its commercial diving activities – typically high-risk in nature – are conducted in strict accord with AS NZS 2299.1:2015.

Safety programmes and initiatives

PacTow has its own internal Safety Awards programme to reward safe work practices and to enhance its safety culture. This programme has been linked to improvements in Lead Indicators such as Near Miss reporting. The company is also the first maritime company globally to introduce a programme that specifically addresses the workplace safety of its female employees – 'Gender Smart Safety'.

This programme, developed by the PNG Business Coalition for Women (BCFW) acknowledges that women have some different safety concerns to their male counterparts. As such, the programme looks at safety from a woman's perspective and involves women in every step of the safety management process – from hazard identification all the way through to risk mitigation, as well as monitoring and review.

Safety services

You are safe in PacTow's hands. PacTow has introduced a range of services to keep other seafarers, our communities, and our environment safe. These include its 24/7 emergency response, salvage, and pollution prevention services, as well as its life raft sales, leasing, and servicing.

Emergency response 24/7

The company maintains specialised response equipment at its headquarters and dedicated tug base in Port Moresby to respond to any emergency in PNG or the broader region. Emergencies responded to are many and varied but include oil spills, vessels that have run aground, and vessels adrift due to mechanical failure. To date the PacTow team has been involved in nearly 100 emergency responses of this nature.

PacTow is also regularly involved in rescuing PNG men, women, and children due to unseaworthy banana boats. Hundreds of lives have been saved by PacTow seafarers.

Salvage and wreck retrieval

PacTow is Melanesia's only full member of the International Salvage Union (ISU). Its salvage and wreck retrieval service, together with its spill response services protect PNG's waters, reefs, and coastlines.

"We're able to prevent or minimise spills by rescuing vessels before they end up running aground such as on a reef or headland.

"Likewise, our salvage teams and commercial divers can pump out the oil and fuel tanks of submerged wrecks before they break-up or corrode, thus preventing considerable environmental damage," Kasnari said.

"Coastal communities in particular rely on clean and healthy waterways for their food and their livelihood. Many of our people also have significant cultural and traditional practices linked to the ocean, and this is just another reason why it's so important for a maritime business like PacTow to help look after it."

Pollution prevention

A member of the International Spill Control Organisation (ISCO), PacTow offers pollution prevention services specifically for the oil and gas sector when they are loading or discharging fuel.

Special booms are deployed to prevent the spread of any fuel on the off chance that a spill occurs. Booms can also be deployed for any other type of ship refuelling such as for international naval vessels that regularly refuel in either Lae or Port Moresby.

The company's spill and pollution prevention expertise has also been put to good use by the NMSA in both National Oil Spill Response Exercises (i.e., practice drills) and the review of the National Oil Spill Response Plan.

Life rafts

PacTow sells, leases, and services premium life raft brands for both commercial and recreational use. Its team of certified technicians are dedicated to safety and saving lives by servicing and maintaining life rafts to the highest international standards.

PacTow delivers excellent, reliable, and safe marine services through PNG and the broader Pacific. A well-maintained fleet, as well as a dedicated and exceptionally trained team underpin PacTow's ongoing expansion and success. PacTow is part of a larger sea and land logistics group wholly owned by Steamships Ltd.

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