

Article re-printed with the kind permission of El Espectador, Colombia.

Moody International acquired Randy Smith Training Solutions in 2007.

EL ESPECTADOR.COM

Monday, March 26, 2007 COLOMBIA



Calificaciones:37

Over 3,000 people were trained last year by Randy Smith Training Solutions.

Lessons for the Oil field

With a real size simulator, there is an international training school for oil industry workers. Students test their skills and learn about safety. Con un simulador de tamaño real, funciona en pleno corazón de Bogotá una escuela de capacitación internacional para empleados de compañías petroleras. Los estudiantes prueban sus habilidades y aprenden sobre seguridad industrial.

By Edwin Bohorquez Aya

Jaime Acero is Randy Smith Training Solutions' main instructor and Operations Executive Director for Mexico and South America. On this picture he's about to start a training on the well simulator.

Gabriel Aponte - El Espectador

Saturday, March 24, 2007

"The sun was setting. The pipe was rotating at over 120 rpm and they had drilled over 6,000 ft looking for oil. The gauge on the control panel showed 2,300 psi and an imminent kick triggered the emergency alarms. The gas bubble started coming up. When it reached the surface a huge fire turned into a deadly explosion. The result was three fatalities, an invaluable environmental disaster and around US\$12 million losses in equipment. The cause of the tragedy was not having shut the well in on time."

This story, which is the summary of a daily experience in the oil field, is told in an almost real scenario, the replica of a conventional well installed in an office, located on Calle 100 and 18, to the north of Bogota. It's the beginning of one of the courses given by Randy Smith Training Solution instructors to oil industry professionals. The objective of the course is for them to learn to manage and prevent these situations, with a hands-on experience, in order to avoid fatalities and optimize results when looking for hydrocarbons.

The area is divided into two rooms. The main one is designed for students to feel as if they were in their normal working environment, and it has six state of the art machines, imported from the US and appraised at over US\$ 300,000. There are only two of these real size simulators in Latin America. The other one is in Brazil, owned by Petrobras who uses it to directly train their own operators.

At this office, black gold seekers operate a driller's panel, the rig, the brake, the choke's remote panel, the well plug, and a moving image which projects the real size of a downhole drillpipe. The simulator's central control is there and it is from there where instructors generate risk situations allowing participants to face unexpected environmental, mechanical and human situations.

"It is key for the student to have full control of the well. Only thus will he be able to overcome real life failures that occur in this delicate mission, and we take care of that", says Jaime Acero, Randy Smith Training Solutions' main instructor and Director for South America and Mexico.

The courses offered by this company strictly adhere to international oil industry standards, amongst which are the American Petroleum Institute's (API), and are certified by the International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC), amongst others. Although courses were initially designed for petroleum engineers, they are now provided for all people involved with the industry.

"For many years, this work was performed in Colombia in an empiric manner. People learned on the job. That's why we prepare courses for different employees of operating and contracting companies", says Acero. "Well supervisors and foremen responsible for the rig are the ones attending the most. We also have personnel from external companies providing muds and others that are in charge of electric downhole logging".

Hands on

International regulations require oil company exploration and drilling employees to have, apart from their profession, these kind of training courses, which are valid for two years.

"These courses are compulsory so as to be certain that they know how to react in any event. For some years we brought French specialists to provide for the training, but results were not the best," says Grace del Pilar Pérez, Human Management Director at Pride International, a company dedicated to providing drilling services to oil companies such as British Petroleum, Occidental, Ecopetrol, and Hocol. "In our case, the most common risk is a well kick (unwanted entry of formation fluids into the wellbore while drilling) and we know that our people are already prepared to face such risk".

To avoid inconvenients, the four Randy Smith Training Solutions instructors were trained at the IADC headquarters in Houston, Texas, and each of them has over 10 years experience in different wells around the world, from Brazil to the US, and to the most remote wells of Congo and Russia.

What stands out the most is that the four instructors are Colombians, and every week they train not only their Colombian colleagues, but also Mexican, Brazilian, Venezuelan and those engineers coming from Europe and the United States to work on different projects in the Andean region. Some of their clients are Ecopetrol, Shell, Petrobras, and service companies such as Saxon and Parker Drilling Company.

Each course lasts for four days, and for two weeks per month between 60 to 70 people are trained on this simulator. The daily cost can be over US\$150 and for basic courses investment is a little over US\$ 1,200. The student gets an international certificate with which he can operate in different wells in America, Europe, or Africa.

Gustavo Builes is one of the students. With several years experience in Ecopetrol and Hocol, he's now an independent consultant and also works as a drilling engineer. "I take these courses for the sake of my safety, for the sake of the companies' safety, and to be updated in terms of industry progress", he says.

"Having this type of equipment allows you to make mistakes and learn from them, and that's what's most important when it comes to implementing this in real life."

Fabio Vivas, a Helmerich & Payne rig manager who has worked in several wells, including some in Africa, agrees with Builes: "This is the fifth course I take and now I profit more actively of the simulators. Some years ago people didn't receive any training and accidents were frequent. With these types of tools, there is no excuse for not being updated or for making mistakes".

Without any doubt, training will continue being an important element this year, now that the Colombian Government and foreign companies plan to drill 70 new exploratory wells. Those same wells are the ones that, according to oil reserves calculated by Ecopetrol and the National Hydrocarbon Agency, will allow the country to be self-sufficient until the 2014. Meanwhile, companies such as Randy Smith are already thinking of opening offices in countries such as Mexico and Venezuela, where they take their traveling schools to and where they say is a promising future for the black gold.