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SKF boosts reliability and efficiency of oil & gas top drive systems

SKF showcased a range of advanced solutions that are helping to improve the operational reliability of critical top drive systems in the oil & gas sector

A range of advanced products and systems from SKF, the knowledge engineering company, are playing an important role in improving the reliability and performance of critical top drive systems used in oil & gas drilling and exploration rigs. SKF top drive solutions include high performance bearings, seals, lubrication and condition monitoring products.

The latest top drive equipment is used to support and rotate the drill string during the drilling process in extreme environmental conditions – both onshore and offshore. Sometimes over 8 km in length, the drill string load on the top drive can exceed 1500 tons. And the drilling process creates additional torsional, vibration and shock loads, posing additional demands on the bearing system with as many as 6 different types of bearings located in 13 positions.

SKF top drive bearing solutions are designed to address these challenges. For example, the main tapered roller thrust bearing has been specifically designed for the drilling industry using the latest SKF modelling programs capable of simulating relevant operating conditions. SKF Sensor bearing units solve application problems in the main drive motor and feature ceramic rolling elements, ATEX approved speed and direction of rotation sensors, high performance double lip seals – all in a lubricated for life, unitised assembly for easy mounting or field retrofit.

Also available are ATEX approved lubrication systems PS-143 gerotor pump, with flow limiters that precisely meter oil quantities, providing reliable and trouble-free lubrication for all lubrication points within each Top Drive unit.

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Condition monitoring is an important element in SKF's top drive offering. The company provides a portable range and online monitoring systems, including the Multilog On-line System family with the intrinsically safe DMx product or the IMx system for advanced monitoring. These systems provide insight into the mechanical health of the top drive, detect changes in operating conditions and allow maintenance work to be planned in advance.

Roland Muttenthaler of SKF, says, "The oil and gas segment is under increasing pressure, to both maintain margins and conform to increasingly tough safety and environmental legislation. Our top drive solutions are part of a wider range of products, asset optimisation services and technical support that help our customers improve the reliability, efficiency and cost performance of their drilling operations, wherever they are in the world."

SKF's top drive solutions were among those that were on show at Hannover fair.

More information: www.skfpowerthefuture.com

SKF is a leading global supplier of bearings, seals, mechatronics, lubrication systems, and services which include technical support, maintenance and reliability services, engineering consulting and training. SKF is represented in more than 130 countries and has around 17,000 distributor locations worldwide. Annual sales in 2015 were SEK 75 997 million and the number of employees was 46 635. www.skf.com

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