

Heerema chooses TETRA

Text of interview by Marjan Jansen
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Heerema Zwijndrecht BV traded in 'a huge stack of transmitting permits' for two-way radios that use the TETRA standard. Supplier Flash Services was able to offer a combination of sophisticated technology and flexibility, which was a boon to the large-scale maritime installation builder.



Communication is vitally important at the Heerema Zwijndrecht BV shipyard. During the busiest stages of dismantling a drilling platform, for example, there could be 1,200 workers on the 15 hectare site, which is located on the banks of the Oude Maas. Work involves installations stretching dozens of metres in height and length and weighing thousands of tonnes. Quick and reliable communication is essential to efficient and safe procedures.

Ever-changing need for communication resources

"Heerema has always assigned top priority to quick and reliable communication", says yard coordinator Bart Pluijmers. However, over the years a variety of obstacles arose that called for a radical reassessment of the choices made in the past. "Flexibility is what has made this company big", says Pluijmers. "The scope of activities can rapidly expand or shrink. Consequently, the need for communication tools likewise varies significantly."

Flexibility key

At Heerema, two-way radios play a part in the transport between equipment plant and manufacturing facilities, security operations, and communications involving crane operators as well as Emergency Assistance Crew members. When new groups of employees (dispatched by clients or external fitters) temporarily join the team, it is important for them to be able to be included in the communication system without any difficulties. Pluijmers: "At a certain point this flexibility was turning into a liability. We no longer had a clear overview; we were saddled with a huge stack of transmitting permits and all sorts of different equipment. Last year when we found ourselves in urgent need of a couple dozen extra radios, it was time to make some new choices."

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New choices

"Changes were made with respect to both technical and commercial directions", according to Adrie van der Linden, who is in charge of maintenance and communication at Heerema. "We were already acquainted with Flash Services, and they provided us with comprehensive information about the possibilities using the TETRA standard. It was exactly what we were looking for. Plus, we have an excellent working relationship with this company. Things were not proceeding smoothly with the previous supplier, which really is not acceptable in this business. Basically, if the worst comes to the worst, you must be able to count on each other, no question about it."

Fast, simple and yet comprehensive

According to account manager Marcel Koelewijn from Flash Services, the TETRA-standard was 'made' for modern enterprises like Heerema. "First, there is the speed; in certain situations, a second can be extremely long. Then you've got the myriad of additional options, for example setting up a temporary telephone line or sending text messages. But also because it is so easy to add and delete groups of new users, as well as consolidate user groups in case of emergency."

Flash has acquired extensive experience using TETRA. "Flawless technology", says Koelewijn. "Not only that, it fits in perfectly with the delivery, instruction, service and maintenance we offer, whether it is for a single piece of equipment for one day, or several hundred for a five-year period. Once again, the flexibility is what makes TETRA so ideal. Using this standard, a solution can be found for every communication hitch."

Product information Tetraflex

For companies or organisations with between 25 and 500 two-way radio users, the step from analogue to digital trunking will be very interesting due to the low pricing and the 'plug and play' concept of the single or multi site DAMM TetraFlex® system.

TetraFlex® is a TETRA digital trunking system, fully based on IP technology. The configuration comprises separate units; 1 System Controller and 1 or more digital base stations (maximum of 4) per site. These units are built in cabinets with IP65 protection classification and can, therefore, be installed without specific civil facilities.

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TetraFlex® has high communication capacity. The TDMA technology (Time Division Multiple Access) employed provides each base station with 4 communication channels on 1 frequency, whereby per site 1 of the channels serves as a control channel. A customer with 3 base stations therefore has (12 – 1) 11 channels for communication.

In addition to individual calls, group calls and emergency calls with or without priorities, TetraFlex® also provides users with facilities such as phone connection and DGNA (Dynamic Group Number Assignment). Dynamic regrouping allows the customer to anticipate every situation as it happens.

A TetraFlex® system is delivered with Network Management Software as standard. This programme gives the technical user the opportunity to have an on-line insight into the system's parameters and, if necessary, carry out corrections or modifications.

For organisations with a large work site, single site systems can be linked together to make one huge radio communication network.

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