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Athens Group Offers Control Systems Software-Specific Safety Seminars for Drilling Contractors and Operators

Houston, Texas, July 13, 2010. Today, Athens Group announced that control systems software-specific safety seminars are now available for drilling contractor and operators who want to provide their crew with increased guidance on software-related safety practices. These 3 hour seminars have been developed and will be delivered by Don Shafer, the company's Chief Technology and Safety Officer, and include (anonymous) real-life case studies, including a description of each safety incident caused by software; the health, safety and environmental (HSE) impact of the incident; and, most importantly, the practices proven to help prevent the incident from happening. Per a recent industry report, the Drilling Control System (DCS) software manages 75 - 95% of the movement and integrated operation of the equipment involved in accidents on the drill floor.* But, because software is invisible, it is often missing in risk assessment plans and overlooked during incident investigation. Therefore, seminar topics will also cover how to identify software as a root cause and how to develop a risk assessment plan for software assets. As part of its commitment to improving safety in the industry, Athens Group is waiving the seminar fee from now through the end of October, 2010.

"New software-dependent technology and its related integration requirements bring new reliability and safety challenges to offshore assets. Due to the current newbuild spike, there are not enough software-experienced personnel in the industry to effectively mitigate the risks," said Mike Haney, CEO at Athens Group. "Providing software-specific safety seminars, based on our experience on over sixty-five high-specification assets compliments our active support of innovation, education and safety through industry associations such as the American Association of Drilling Engineers (AADE), American Petroleum Institute, (API) Drilling Engineers Association, International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) and Wellsite Information Transfer Standard Markup Language (WITSML)."

For more information or to schedule a seminar on your site, please contact
safetyoffice@athensgroup.com

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* The State of NPT on High-Specification Offshore Assets: Second Annual Benchmarking Report. The report is available on the web at:
http://www.athensgroup.com/images/stories/articles/2010%20whitepaper%204_12_2010.pdf.

About Don Shafer
At Athens Group, Don has led engineers in delivering software services for exploration, production, and pipeline monitoring systems for clients such as BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, and Shell for more than eight years. His cumulative experience is now part of Athens Group's Proven Practices[SM] Methodologies, which incorporate Athens Group's experience on over sixty-five high-specification assets, industry-specific standards and regulations, and best practices from other industries. As a recognized expert on the mission-critical control systems software now ubiquitous on high-specification offshore assets, Don is often asked to speak at industry conferences on the topic of software-related risk mitigation and problem remediation. The most recent conferences and topics include: 2010 IADC World Drilling Conference – How to Stop the Flood of Superfluous Alarms and Achieve Alarm Management Compliance; 2010 IADC HSE Conference – The Hidden Causes of Lost Time Incidents that No One is Talking About; 2009 SPE Americas Environmental & Safety Conference – Rig Safety and Reliability Incidents Caused by Software – How They Could Have Been Prevented; and 2009 IADC World Drilling Conference – Software: The Invisible Root Cause of Equipment Failures and Safety Incidents.

With more than 40 years of experience, Don has led groups developing and marketing hardware and software products for Motorola, AMD, and Crystal Semiconductor. From the development of low-level software drivers to the selection and monitoring of semiconductor facilities, he has led key product and process efforts. Twice Treasurer of the IEEE Computer Society and member of the Board of Governors, past editor-in-chief and chair of the IEEE Computer Society Press, an IEEE senior member, and a Golden Core member, he is an adjunct professor of engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. Shafer has contributed to three books, written more than 20 published articles, and is coauthor of Quality Software Project Management, published by Prentice-Hall. He is a contributor to the 2010 edition of the Encyclopedia of Software Engineering and is a Certified Software Development Professional.

About Athens Group

The high rate of non-productive time (NPT) and project delays on today's highly-automated offshore assets is unacceptable! Drilling Contractors and Operators rely on Athens Group to help them reduce NPT, improve safety and safeguard the environment through the prevention of software-related equipment failures. Our Drilling Technology Assurance[SM] Services were developed specifically for highly integrated control systems and are tailored for each phase of the asset lifecycle. Athens Group has more expertise in this specialized area than any other vendor. Our Proven Practices[SM] Methodology; software, hardware, and network topology experience; and vendor equipment experience speed risk identification and mitigation. This is why the cost ratio of our services to NPT savings typically exceeds 1:100. Our customers, industry-leading companies such as BP, Chevron, ENI, ExxonMobil, Maersk, Marathon, Noble Drilling, Pacific Drilling, Shell, Stena Drilling, Total and Transocean, to name just a few, are all referenceable.