

Securing Safety

Falck Safety Services has safety in its DNA with the company developing and delivering safety services to industries and companies across the globe.

Images by Jerry Nielsen

Falck Safety Services delivers world-leading health, safety, and survival training, and safety consultancy services to some of the toughest industries in the world, from the oil and gas sector to shipping, renewable energy, military, and aviation. With more than three decades of experience and service under its belt and 30 purpose-built training centres, Falck Safety Services is providing its clients with innovative, cost-effective training and consultancy solutions across five continents.

In addition to these training centres, Falck Safety Services offers mobile training units that can provide truly portable safety solutions to clients across the globe. With more than 1,500 highly skilled personnel across Falck Safety Services' network, the company is mining and investing in the best talent and skills. One of these people is CEO Peter Svarrer, who assumed the role six years ago.

Before joining Falck Safety Services, Peter spent 24 years in the maritime and offshore industry, working first in Denmark and then in Spain, the United States, Peru, Thailand, North Africa, Vietnam, and Singapore. During his time in Singapore, Peter undertook an MBA at the Henley Business School at the University of Reading to solidify his experience. In 2008, Peter joined Falck Safety Services and capitalised on his global experience.

"It was an international company but I was hired to globalise it and to take it to a broader scale internationally," states Peter. "When I was hired in the beginning of 2008, the crisis had not set in yet. However, I didn't start until August because one of the ships I was managing was captured by Somali pirates so I stayed in my previous job until we got the ship back.

"Then, when I started at Falck Safety Services the crisis had set in and oil prices were beginning to

plunge. We service the oil industry, so what we did as a team was we looked at the organisation and we made some significant changes to it. We made sure that the organisation was geared towards the challenges in the market."

This transformation was made with the support and backing of Falck Safety Services' parent company, Falck, a Nordic-based organisation with business activities in 44 countries on six continents and employing 32,000 people. Falck's activities are directed at preventing accidents and disease; providing assistance in situations of emergency, accidents and need; and helping people move on with their lives after illness or accidents. Peter says the values and principles passed down from Falck and instilled in their company's structure have been pivotal.

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saving lives for 107 years so our values are vital. We also made sure that we had our costs under control. It was old school really, but with the added angle that we made sure that the values we had were very strongly implemented.

“We started to raise barriers to entry, which sounds like a bad thing, but what we did was we started to invest heavily in quality safety-training equipment that doesn’t break down while you train people. At the same time, we continued with our global rollout so we did actually expand.”

This change has been reflected across the industry as Falck Safety Services leads the shift towards a more holistic and integrated approach to safety training. Peter states, “I hope that we have been part of a change in the industry. Five or six years ago it was mostly about compliance. Customers needed to be compliant with safety rules and regulations to operate. That was basically the goal: to make sure that our customer was compliant.

“However, in recent years the majority of our customers have wanted to go beyond that base goal. They want to make absolutely sure that not only are they compliant but they’re also setting very high safety standards. The safety investments in the industries we service have been enormous.

“We’ve seen price tags on rigs and platforms and if you have an accident, even a small one, the authorities could come in and close the operation until they’ve investigated it. It costs a lot of money and it’s very bad image-wise, so our customers understand that if they want to take good care of their people then their safety standards need to be more than just compliant.”

Falck Safety Services is also setting the bar higher for itself as the company continues to expand its operations and facilities. “It’s actually very simple. We have followed our customers around the world,” explains Peter. “That was



what we decided when I came in. Our customers are spreading around the world. In the old days it would be the North Sea and the US Gulf. Now you see a move into ultra-deep water in Brazil, West Africa, and elsewhere. You see a lot of activities in the Middle East and Asia so what we’ve basically done is we’ve talked to our customers and they have told us where they want us to be and we’ve done that to a large extent.

“The latest example is in Angola, which is an up-and-coming market. Our customers have told us for a while that we need to be in Angola and we listened. We’re not deep into the Angola market as it’s fairly new, but we have set up an office there and we’ve equipped and manned it. It is one of the up-and-coming deep-water markets with a very high potential and a lot of activity from the larger players in the oil and gas industry.

“We have global customers and they demand that they get the same service and standards all over the world. It is no longer acceptable that you train your Danish or UK crew to a better or higher standard than you train

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your Angolan or Nigerian crew. I think having a more standardised training program is the key but it has to be to the highest available standards.”

As Falck Safety Services plays a key role in ensuring the future safety of the world’s workers, Peter says that the company will focus on three strategy areas. “One area is that we will continue the geographical expansion that we’ve already embarked on. We are in 19 countries and there are a handful of countries that we’d like to be in. We would also like to roll out higher value products, like the management of major emergencies and scenario training where you’re dealing with and training crews at various levels. We’re already running simulated trainings where you sit in a mock-up of a bridge on a platform and we run emergency scenarios. We want to roll that out across the globe.

“We also want to make sure that the standards of training are continuously improved. We invest a lot of money in state-of-the-art equipment. We use hoists that are double-wired with redundancy switches. Our training facilities



are becoming more and more advanced in the sense that they deliver training as close to a real scenario as possible, without jeopardising the safety of the participants.

“Another area that we’re looking at is the maritime segment, not only on the offshore oil and gas segment, but in other areas as well. There are a lot of things happening in the maritime industry with recent accidents that have put a lot of emphasis on safety. It’s one of those areas where we’re already involved but where we’ll definitely use our global presence to deliver that on a larger scale.”

With the company expanding and exploring new and emerging markets, Peter says that the company is investing in its employees across the globe. “We

are very dependent on our personnel and we only hire people with experience in these situations. They’re experienced firefighters, offshore workers, and servicemen. Those people are also in high demand in the oil and gas industry. Obviously, it’s difficult for us to compete with the big oil companies so we attract people with our good working environment, our good products, and local content.

“We put a lot of emphasis on that for two reasons. First of all, I want access to local labour pools. Secondly, our customers also want suppliers who emphasise local content. For instance, in Nigeria we employ mostly local people and we’ve spent a lot of money on training them. As a result, they develop a sense of loyalty towards the company because we give

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them opportunities to travel the world. Whether you’re from Africa or Brazil, we have people from all over the world travelling, setting up businesses, and training people.

“Local content is key. It’s one of those things that you have to take very seriously because countries try to make sure that they get as much out of their natural resources as possible. One way they can do this is by making sure that local people get the jobs and that’s what we try to help with.”

By focusing on its people, performance, and peerless standards, Falck Safety Services will continue to deliver its core passion. “Safety is in our DNA. We are part of a company that for the past 107 years has focused on running ambulances, fire brigades, health clinics, and so on, so it’s a natural thing for us to focus on safety. We don’t do anything to jeopardise safety because it’s all that we do. We are very proud to occupy this space and I don’t think anybody else can occupy it like we do because it’s all we do. We don’t do engineering or catering. We do safety.

“I think our global reach also makes us unique. It means that we’ll be able to deliver to our customers globally, both with the standards that they need and the bespoke training programs that have been developed across their operations.

“If we develop a bespoke training program for a company’s headquarters in the United States, then as that company expands and develops new offices or sites in places like Brazil or Nigeria, we can then tell our crews in those locations to use that same bespoke training program. They’ll get the same company standard and company-specific safety training program. That’s what makes us unique.”

These differences will shape the future of Falck Safety Services as it works with companies across the globe to hone and implement the best safety standards and systems. ●

