




## Clearing Benchmarks



*International vessel loading at Savonetta Pier No.4 in Point Lisas Harbour*





# National Energy - Learning and growing from COVID-19





The mark of a strong, best-in-class company is the ability to adapt and grow in the face of challenges. National Energy Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, an exemplar of port operations in the region, has once again demonstrated its strength in the way it has adapted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to process innovations implemented over the past few months, business continuity response mechanisms and the experience of keeping business running in spite of a derailing pandemic, the company is now even better equipped to hold its own among international best-in-class operators.

### Working through COVID-19

Under the Public Health Ordinance Regulations Ch. 12 No. 4 Clause 3, effective 23 March 2020, Trinidad and Tobago closed its borders. Movement of people into and out of the country would only be allowed with approval from the Minister of National Security; a stringent measure taken to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus by preventing its importation from abroad. Under the Regulations, energy, and energy-related services as well as port and marine operations were categorised as essential services and were therefore expected to continue.

As the agency responsible for the operations of Savonetta Piers 1 – 4, ISCOTT Dock, the Port of Galeota and the Port of Brighton, as well as a fleet of towage vessels, National Energy was required to ensure that its commercial activities continued without compromising the health and safety of persons and security of property during the pandemic. Against the backdrop of the mandatory shutting down of several businesses, it was even more crucial that port and marine operations continued to allow import and export of goods and materials needed by citizens and to generate revenues.

National Energy immediately activated its Business Continuity Plan. Although the plan did not specifically refer to a health-related scenario, it provided a framework within which specific responses to any unfolding situation could be addressed, including the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Two aspects of the business were prioritised for implementation of business continuity protocols – Port and Marine Operations and Human Resource Management.

### Port & Marine Operations

National Energy's management of its Port and Marine Operations was centred around the tenets of:

- Compliance with Government-mandated health and safety protocols as the situation evolved;
- Strengthening of relationships with stakeholders to ensure their compliance with established protocols and procedures; and
- Collaboration with port health officials



*Social distancing markers have been installed at National Energy's office*

Key stakeholders were identified including port health officials, customs and excise officials, National Energy's crewing contractor, port users, and industry partners such as the Point Lisas Energy Association (PLEA). Through a process of ongoing collaboration and communication, enhanced cargo handling procedures were developed and implemented to ensure that there were no disruptions at the marine facilities. Additionally, no shore leave was granted to crews from international vessels in keeping with the status of Trinidad and Tobago's borders being closed.

To ensure that the marine vessels remained fully functional while protecting the crews onboard, crew rotations and marine asset configurations were amended to 14 days instead of the usual seven-day rotation. This period of sequestration was aligned to the minimum quarantine period being implemented by the Ministry of Health. Standby crews were also engaged as a redundancy measure to ensure that operations would continue should a crew member become ill. To minimise contact opportunities, maintenance activity was also limited to critical defects and safety activities during the pandemic. Letters of authorisation informing of their required mobility were issued to essential contractors as needed.



## Human Resource Management

Across the NGC Group of Companies, priority was given to the protection of employees. Therefore, measures were developed and implemented, including Pandemic Leave and a Work-from-Home Policy. Provisions were made for non-essential employees and those who were immunocompromised to work from home and where applicable, Pandemic Leave was applied to eligible employees.

All essential employees required to be physically present at the office and other work sites, such as the ports and piers were issued with Company authorisation letters to support their mobility for work activities during the period of restriction. Where possible, these workers were rostered, to reduce contact. Disposable face masks were provided to all essential workers daily and reusable cloth masks were distributed to all other employees.

Communication with employees was facilitated through several technological platforms available to the organisation, including Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Teams, Zoom etc. National Energy's Human Resource and Corporate Communication Departments ensured that employees received regular notices of Ministry of Health and Post-Cabinet media conferences as well as the live links to said conferences. Relevant updates were also shared with respect to any changes in the provision of utilities and other services to the public.

## Post-Pandemic 'Business Unusual'

Having most of its employees working from home provided the ultimate test of the Company's resilience and flexibility, as staff at all levels were required to adopt new ways of connecting and collaborating. It became evident that the Company's investment in Information Communication Technology (ICT) over the years was well placed, as the existing ICT platforms were used to enable the business to run efficiently and effectively. National Energy intends to continue to capitalise on its ICT products and systems in creative ways, especially since Work-from-Home may become part of the new working arrangements for the medium term.

In fact, developmental work continues on one of the Company's boldest ICT-related projects to date – the Digitisation and Automation of Processes for Marine Asset Management. In the coming months, the order-to-payment process for National Energy's fleet of towage vessels will be fully digitised. This will reduce time delays and costs from the process, since requests for towage services, payments, bookings, and invoicing will be automated. Digitisation of other processes for marine assets is also planned for 2020.



*Employees must wear masks and sanitise before entering the facility*

The delivery of mandatory HSSE training for Users and Operators at the Savonetta Piers, ISCOTT Dock and the Port of Galeota will now be conducted online. The information is being presented with the use of produced videos as well as online Question and Answer sessions. Representatives of National Energy's HSSE Team will guide the sessions, fielding and posing questions to the participants who will be registered electronically. At the end of the training, participants will receive the requisite permits to work in accordance with established protocols at the facilities.

The importance of communication was also underscored during the period of restriction. Through National Energy Communications, timely and relevant updates were disseminated to staff on an ongoing basis and several employees indicated that they relied upon these communiqués for up-to-date information. Deeper communication and collaboration with our essential service providers and key stakeholders will also be a feature of the Company's future business approach, to further enhance the level of service provided to our customers.

With the phased return to work following the nationwide Stay-at-Home period, National Energy will implement all relevant protocols to ensure the safety of its employees and stakeholders. While it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic challenges business processes and the company's ability to adapt and grow, it is equally evident that by embracing new ways of working, it has been and will continue to be able to rise to the challenge. National Energy embraces the opportunity to emerge as a modern, technology-driven, learning organisation – best in its class – ready to meet and conquer the challenges of the future energy business. ■