

Firms fined £15,000 after oilmen's deaths on gangway

OCCIDENTAL was fined £5000 yesterday on safety charges after the deaths of three oilmen and the men's employer, Strathclyde Process Engineering Ltd., was fined £10,000. The oil company admitted at Aberdeen Sheriff Court two charges of breaching the Offshore Installations (Operational Safety, Health and Welfare) Regulations. Pleas of not guilty were accepted on two other charges.

Strathclyde Process Engineering Ltd. admitted one charge under the Health and Safety at Work Act. The men died in October 1982 when a 120ft. gangway linking Occidental's Piper Alpha oil platform and the accommodation rig, Tharos, collapsed into the North Sea while it was being raised.

They were John Grealis, 50, of Woodside Road, Stirling, John

Rowan, 30, of Mull Crescent, Broomlands, Irvine, and Geoffrey Lambert, 22, of Broadhaven Close, Cleveland, Eston,

Mrs Helen Ross, prosecuting, outlined several faults in the assembly of equipment used in the lifting operations.

She said only three bulldog clips held the gangway's supporting wire rope in place when four were required under

the regulations. Other faults included parts which were too large and a chain system which was not tightened sufficiently. She said: "No one gave the men instructions, it was presumed they knew what to do. No one on the platform was qualified to check their work. The foreman was a trades foreman with no specialised knowledge. "I interviewed the men in question and they all admitted

they could not have said how many clips were needed."

Sheriff Muir Russell said: "This is both a sad case and a serious one because from what I have heard I feel very satisfied that this tragedy is one which need not have happened."

He ruled that although Occidental could not get out of its responsibilities, Strathclyde Process Engineering shared a larger proportion of the blame.