

This is Google's cache of

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/11896584.Piper_Alpha_valve_fitter_given_a_notice_of_blame/. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on 3 Jul 2018 14:21:26 GMT. The [current page](#) could have changed in the meantime. [Learn more.](#)

Full version[Text-only version](#)[View source](#)

22nd April 1989

Piper Alpha valve fitter given a notice of blame

A PIPER Alpha survivor who supervised the removal of a vital pressure safety valve has had a notice of blame hanging over him for months, it was revealed yesterday at the public inquiry into the disaster at Aberdeen.

The notice relates to the fitting of flanges to adjoining pipework after the valve was removed for refurbishing from the gas conservation module on the platform. The man notified of this legal notice is Alexander Rankin, 30, the valve technician from Peterhead who has been giving evidence during the past two days.

A cross-examination by Occidental QC, Mr John Mitchell, was interrupted by Mr Michael Jones, QC for valve contractors Score UK, by whom Mr Rankin is employed.

"He is a survivor of a particular type," Mr Jones told Lord Cullen.

"Not only has he come through the trauma of the disaster but he has had a notice of blame hanging over his head for some months now -- a notice of blame notified to him and to the inquiry by Occidental."

Mr Jones said the blame was limited to an assertion that Mr Rankin and/or Mr Sutton, a colleague who did not survive the disaster, failed to fit or properly fit blank flanges.

Mr Jones said that if Mr Mitchell's line of questioning was intended to broaden the scope of that notice "this inquiry might wish to inquire how that is intended to be broadened".

Mr Mitchell said he intended to develop a line which may have "the most compelling relevance".

Lord Cullen asked him if it was his intention to develop a new line of blame, but Mr Mitchell said he wanted to find out how much the people who operated the permit-to-work system, in particular the witness, knew of that system.

Lord Cullen allowed the cross-examination to proceed, but Mr Mitchell moved quickly on from questions about job permits and how long they remained valid to other aspects of evidence.

Mr Rankin said later that it had been when the Department of Energy's technical investigation interim report was published that he learned that there was the possibility of a condensate (gas liquid) from the leak from the blank flanges.

The report was published last September, two months after the disaster in which 167 men died.

Later Mr Rankin was asked by Mr Jones: "How strict were Score in matters of carrying out of tasks? Was it a matter of importance or indifference to them?"

Mr Rankin replied: "It was a matter of their reputation."

The inquiry continues on Monday.