

Darien's Heidmar Plans Gulf Growth

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Darien's Heidmar group of companies is dipping deeper into the Gulf of Mexico's oil industry with the purchase of Houston Marine Services Inc.

Heidmar's Texas Marine Services Inc. affiliate closed the deal yesterday on HMS, which provides marine fuel, lubricants and marine services to customers along the Texas and Louisiana coasts and offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.

Heidmar officials would not disclose the price.

HMS's major customers and suppliers include most of the major oil companies and other marine services providers. It has supplied products and services to ships, barges, towboats, tug, offshore supply boats and seismic vessels for more than 25 years.

Called a "friendly" acquisition, the purchase should enhance HMS services and efficiencies, according to Jim Bailey, president of Heidenreich Lightering Services Inc., which operates on the Gulf Coast. Bailey is also the new president of TMS.

"The Texas Marine Services acquisition of Houston Marine Services was based upon a desire to enter the bunker and marine services industry with an organization that has a strong management team and a customer and quality oriented business focus," Bailey said, calling the operation a perfect fit for the Heidmar philosophy.

"The purchase by Texas Marine Services provides Houston Marine Services with access to advanced technologies and business procedures," said HMS President Geren Graham. It will continue to trade under the HMS name.

HMS largest marine terminal is located on 50 acres along the north side of the Houston Ship Channel. It has other operations in Port Arthur, Texas; Texas City, Texas; and Lake Charles, La., and a fleet of five tow boats, 12 barges and a small tanker.

The company's vessels are capable of carrying fuel oil, distillates, potable water, marine lubricants, equipment, stores and personnel to vessels and offshore platforms in the Gulf.

HMS, which has 150 employees and annual revenues of \$180 million, also operates a wastewater treatment plant at its facility on the Houston Ship Channel.

The acquisition gives Heidmar added abilities to provide efficient bunkering -- or refueling and other tank-related services -- to partners in the pools of tankers it operates, said Michael Hanson,

vice president of MTI Network, a Stamford firm that provides information on the shipping industry.

Heidmar, through Heidenreich Marine, controls and operates 72 tankers in three pools for 22 global ship owners. Servicing those ships through HMS will result in time savings, important in an era when tankers are in high demand and operators are able to command top dollar because of increasing oil usage worldwide.

"At today's charter rates, you're talking serious money," Hanson said. "Houston Marine is a full-service operation. It has a small deep sea tanker that meets ships at sea. Houston Marine can take waste oil and waste water off tankers and treat it at its treatment facility. That's really important because that's not a common bunkering service."

Houston Marine also will have access to Heidmar's technology and its Q88 Internet service for information on ships, Hanson said.