

The Woman Engineer

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NAKAI MADISHI is the first woman to qualify as a female remotely operated vehicle (ROV) pilot at Global Marine Systems ROV training school in Portland. ROVs are used in the oil, gas and cable burial industries.

Nakai studied aircraft engineering with the Air Force in her native Zimbabwe. She wanted to become an ROV pilot after seeing a TV programme about them.

"I used to work with aircraft, such as helicopters, and I was excited by the opportunity to operate a vehicle which 'flies' under water," she said. "After seeing an ROV in operation a couple of years ago on the National Geographic channel, I fell in love with it. I knew I wanted to pilot one, and possibly work with ROVs when the opportunity arose."

She chose to train with Global Marine Systems because all the flying hours she accrued were on an actual ROV rather than on a simulator. She was undaunted by entering a field dominated by men.

"The field being so dominated by men was actually a motivating factor for me. It was quite exciting to make a break-through in the industry, and men also dominated my previous career, as a helicopter technician.

"The training itself was not easy, there was a lot to read and grasp in a few weeks, but having hard-working and dedicated instructors was just the trick for me, and I managed to sail through the course. Also, the instructors never discriminated against me because I was a woman – in fact, they acted like I just was one of the guys, which made life easier for me."

First female to pilot remotely operated vehicles

Nakai now plans to do a marine high voltage safety course and a sea survival course before she starts looking for a job next year.

"I haven't started working yet, but when I do, I know I'll enjoy maintaining as well as piloting the ROV. Piloting the ROV is the cleaner side of the job and maintaining it is the dirtier side of the job and I just love getting dirty! The spanners, dirty overalls etc, I love it all," she said.

Nakai has been encouraged and supported in her chosen career by her mother and brother.

"I have three very important people in my life – my mum and my brother, and my 4 year old daughter, who means the world to me. My world revolves around her and I don't really have much 'me' time, except

for spending time with my daughter. But I also love going to the movies and spending time outdoors."

