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## 25,000 Inspections Strong: Minerals Management Service Ensures a Safe Offshore Working Environment

Every offshore rig, every floating or fixed platform, every offshore energy exploration structure in Federal offshore areas must be inspected annually by the Minerals Management Service (MMS). Amounting to thousands of inspections per year, MMS inspectors work to make certain that the structures are safe.

The program is working. Companies that have been cited for safety violations in the past are inspected more frequently than once per year, and inspections are often unannounced. MMS uses a statistical sampling program that allows inspectors to randomly conduct inspections, and this has contributed to a 95 percent assurance rate that a given offshore facility is in compliance with regulations.

In an effort to make certain that the offshore safety record continues to improve, a \$2.1 million increase is requested in the FY 2007 budget. Components of the request are \$1.46 million for flight and availability charges (standard aspects of a helicopter rental contract), \$200,000 for increased fuel costs, \$260,000 for two engineering positions with deep water expertise, \$130,000 for a Land Law Examiner position, and \$50,000 for the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

It should be noted that MMS pursues civil and criminal penalties against violators of Federal offshore safety and environmental protection regulations.

### *Helicopter Services*

In FY 2007, the MMS contract for helicopter services will expire. The budget request will cover increases in the hourly cost of flight time, which is expected to increase at a rate of about 8 percent per year over the life of the five-year contract.

To ensure continued first-rate safe offshore working conditions, MMS has increased the number of safety inspections by 10 percent per year since 1999. With the conduct of 25,000 safety and compliance inspections each year by helicopter to offshore facilities, failure to fully fund this program could ultimately lead to fewer energy resources in the downstream marketplace. Maintaining offshore safety inspections is a critical function.





### ***New Technology Evaluation***

Energy exploration and production in deep waters currently accounts for 25 percent of offshore activity and the percentage is expected to increase.

Exploration and production in deep water brings its own set of unique safety concerns which call for the near-constant review of standards. Energy and safety professionals from MMS currently participate in more than 50 working groups, focusing on a myriad of new offshore technologies that must be carefully evaluated prior to use in the offshore environment. An increase of \$260,000 for new technology evaluation and standards development is requested.

In summary, MMS's overall mission is to manage offshore oil and gas exploration in the 1.76 billion acres of the OCS. With passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, MMS has been assigned the added responsibility of regulating ***alternative*** energy sources in the OCS such as wind, wave and solar. On behalf of all Americans, MMS collects, accounts for and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian leases, one of the largest sources of revenue to the U.S. Federal Treasury.

For more information, contact the MMS Office of Public Affairs at (202) 208-3985 or visit [www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov).