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Offshore Safety Equipment and Minerals Management Service Personnel Hold Strong in Face of Hurricanes' One-Two Punch

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had the most significant, destructive impact on oil and gas development in the history of energy exploration in the Gulf of Mexico. Of the 4,000 offshore energy-related structures in the Gulf, 3,050 were in the path of the hurricanes. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan destroyed seven platforms. The combined force of Katrina and Rita destroyed 115 offshore platforms.

In the midst of the devastation, the carefully designed offshore safety devices were a success story. Thanks in large part to careful attention to safety devices and standards throughout the exploration and development process – devices and standards cooperatively developed by MMS and the energy industry – much of the offshore equipment weathered the hurricanes with flying colors. Additional, positive outcomes post-hurricanes were:

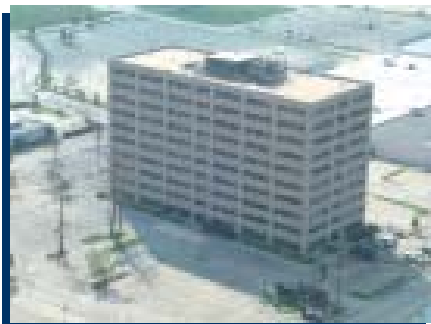
- There were no well spills. All of the well shut-off valves held and worked as designed.
- Spills from ruptured pipelines were limited.
- Spills caused by the hurricanes are expected to be less than 10 barrels per million produced.
- Despite nearly insurmountable odds, by the end of 2005, 75 percent of Gulf oil and gas production was back on-line.

And most importantly:

- There was no loss of life associated with offshore energy exploration and production and the hurricanes.

All MMS employees in the New Orleans area were significantly impacted by the hurricanes. In ways both professional and personal, these two most destructive hurricanes ever in a single year had an impact on offshore energy that will never be completely erased. Keeping lines of communication open between MMS and the energy industry – around the clock for weeks - to bring oil and gas back into production as quickly as possible became a unifying goal.

In the immediate aftermath of the storms, virtually all energy production was "shut-in," meaning out of production and unavailable for distribution, purchase, and consumption. That changed quickly as day by day, the numbers steadily improved. By the end of 2005, about 75 percent of oil and gas was back on-line, a significant effort on the part of many who, at the same time, were dealing with enormous personal losses .





A summary of impacts to MMS personnel:

- As of September 2005, 236 of the 530 MMS employees in the area affected by Hurricane Katrina had sustained significant losses, including complete - or nearly complete - destruction of their homes.
- As of late October 2005, the homes of nearly 100 MMS employees were completely destroyed due to the combined force of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. At one point, about 30 percent of the MMS workforce in the Gulf was evacuated.
- And as 2005 drew to a close, about 30 MMS employees continued to live in trailers provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

It is not an overstatement to say that acts of heroism and selflessness on the part of MMS employees became routine in the weeks and months following the hurricanes.

For more information on MMS and the 2005 hurricane season, contact MMS's Office of Public Affairs at (202) 208-3985 or visit www.mms.gov.