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MMS Rule Enhances Hurricane Safety of Offshore Platforms

Design and Assessment Criteria Strengthened

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) issued a final rule in today's Federal Register to improve the survivability of offshore platforms and increase environmental safety during hurricane events.

Today's rule incorporates three API bulletins that contain engineering design principles and good practices for new platforms and assessments of existing platforms by imposing more stringent design and assessment criteria for both new and existing structures in the Gulf of Mexico. The new criteria will increase survivability during hurricane conditions and result in fewer damaged platforms, thereby protecting critical oil and gas resources and making those resources available after hurricane events.

Damage to the oil and gas infrastructure as a result of the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons included the destruction of 123 fixed structures and one floating facility, as well as significant damage to dozens of other fixed and floating structures. Following the hurricanes, MMS, API, and members of the offshore oil and gas industry collaborated to improve the standards by which Outer Continental Shelf structures are designed and assessed to withstand meteorological events involving wind, wave, current and surge.

The bulletins, listed below, impose more stringent design and assessment criteria for both new and existing structures located within particular Gulf of Mexico areas:

- BULLETIN 2INT-MET, *Interim Guidance on Hurricane Conditions in the Gulf of Mexico*
- BULLETIN 2INT-DG, *Interim Guidance for Design of Offshore Structures for Hurricane Conditions*

- BULLETIN 2INT-EX, *Interim Guidance for Assessment of Existing Offshore Structures for Hurricane Conditions*.

The rule came about as a result of a great deal of coordination and study by MMS and API to ensure that the best possible guidance was provided and that all possibilities were considered. This time consuming process allows MMS to make sure that the industry is better prepared for future storms.

The final rule, *RIN 1010-AD48 Incorporate American Petroleum Institute Hurricane Bulletins*, becomes effective May 15, 2008.

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