



NEWS RELEASE

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT
Eileen Angelico, 504-736-2595
Caryl Fagot, 504-736-2590

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MMS Prepares for 2008 Hurricane Season

Focus on security of energy production, environmental protection, and personnel safety

HOUSTON — In preparation for Hurricane Season 2008, which begins June 1, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today discussed actions to reduce risk of severe damage to oil and gas infrastructure in the Gulf of Mexico in the event of hurricanes this season. Key goals of the preparations are to enhance the nation's energy security, provide environmental protection, and continue the emphasis on personnel safety.

MMS officials participated in a media forum with representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard and the American Petroleum Institute (API), to discuss new final rules regarding enhanced information on hurricane conditions and the design of offshore structures. Officials also provided updates on the continued recovery efforts from the 2005 Hurricane Season.

"Energy production from the Gulf is vital to our Nation's energy supply, and it's imperative that MMS continues our strong emphasis on preparations to reduce the risk of an extended disruption of energy production from the Gulf," said MMS Deputy Director Walter Cruickshank. "By working with all involved parties, including the U.S. Coast Guard, the API, and the oil and gas industry, MMS remains steadfast in our goal to improve the protection of oil and gas production in the Gulf from disruptions during this hurricane season."

Building on improvements made prior to the 2007 hurricane season, such as new guidance documents focusing on enhanced design standards and a Web site dedicated to hurricane information, MMS incorporated three API bulletins containing the enhanced design standards as well as assessment criteria for both new and existing structures in the Gulf of Mexico into a final rule that becomes effective today, May 15, 2008. The new criteria will increase platform survivability during hurricane conditions and result in fewer damaged platforms.

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“Incorporating these new criteria into the final rule will improve the protection of critical oil and gas infrastructure and allow oil and gas operators to restore production sooner following an hurricane event,” explained Cruickshank.

The 2005 hurricane season saw a depth and breadth of destruction and disruption in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico unlike ever experienced before. Two major hurricanes, Katrina and Rita, sliced through the heart of the offshore oil and gas activity, damaging about 75 percent of the offshore facilities with hurricane force winds. In spite of the destruction there were no significant oil spills from wells, no evidence that oil from OCS facilities reached shore or impacted birds or mammals, and, perhaps most important, all offshore personnel were evacuated safely. That success resulted from extensive planning and preparation overseen by MMS and implemented by the oil and gas industry. The aim is to further improve that performance this year.

—MMS—

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