

Safety Alert

MMS

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region**

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Loss of Well Control from Sustained Casing Pressure

An operator representative recently reported gas leaking at the mud line on an offshore facility. After running diagnostics, it appeared that a tubing leak resulted in tubing/casing communication above the packer. The resulting pressure caused a leak or rupture at a weak point in the 9 5/8" production casing, with gas flowing around the 16" surface casing shoe and up to the mud line. Numerous attempts were made to kill the well without success, when evacuation was necessary as a result of Tropical Depression #10. Upon return to the site, the structure was found toppled/sunk by the operator. A relief well was drilled and the well was killed 49 days later.

Casing pressure was first noted seven months prior to the discovery of the well leaking at the mud line and again one month prior to the well leaking at the mid line. In both cases the operator representatives failed to follow proper procedures in reporting casing pressures to both company management personnel and to MMS.

The evidence in this investigation does not provide the necessary information to indicate definitely how or why failure occurred, however, had the casing pressure been reported as necessary, timely intervention measures may have prevented the loss of well control.

Therefore, MMS makes the following recommendations:

- Lessees and Operators should review their policies regarding casing pressures.
- Lessees and Operators should communicate clearly and in writing what is expected of their field representatives with respect to reporting casing pressures.
- Operators are reminded to refer to NTL 2005-G09, Static Casing Pressures Less than 100 psig, dated June 1, 2005, should they experience wells with sustained casing pressure.

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