



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

Notice No. 102

June 8, 1981

OCS Operations Safety Alert

Fire

Poor preventive maintenance was the cause of a fire on a production platform in the Gulf of Mexico. There were no injuries, but the damage to the compressor building and equipment was \$30,000. The accident occurred when the rod packing on a compressor cylinder failed, releasing high-pressure gas into the cylinder distance piece. This, in turn, ruptured a plexiglass inspection plate on the distance piece and allowed a large volume of gas to enter the compressor building. The gas came in contact with the uninsulated portion of an engine exhaust manifold and ignited. An investigation revealed that the piston rod was worn and tapered and that improper packing material had been used. Also, the rod packing vent manifold was incapable of venting the leaking gas rapidly enough.

In order to prevent a recurrence of this nature, the operator will publish an Operation Bulletin outlining the following steps to be taken:

1. All compressor rods are to be removed and returned to the original factory specifications, including packing material, before further use.
2. Frequency and detail of piston rod and packing inspection will be increased.
3. Packing vent manifolds will be sized to permit venting in case of packing failure.
4. Engine exhausts will be completely insulated.

[signed] D.W. Solanas

Deputy Conservation Manager

Offshore Operations Support

Gulf of Mexico OCS Region