



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

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OCS Operations Safety Alert

Compressor Fires

Recently, there have been a series of gas fires on platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. These accidents were attributed to leaking gas around compressors and gas starter exhaust vents. It is the purpose of this alert to bring to the attention of the operators these type of accidents and a means of prevention. Two such accidents are summarized as follows:

1. Escaping gas from a flange gasket located between the compressor discharge cylinder and volume bottle caused a flash fire. It is believed that the gas was ignited by the engine or exhaust system. The fire was put out immediately. There were no injuries and only minor damage.
2. A welder was working near a gas starter exhaust vent when a mechanic attempted to start the compressor. Exhaust gas from the starter came in contact with sparks from the welding operation and ignited. The fire was put out quickly with minor damage to the platform; however, there were three persons injured with minor burns to their hands and faces.

The accidents cited above illustrate a need for surveillance of equipment and connections to prevent gas leakage, and also that safety of operations should be emphasized to employees when working in areas where gas leaks or venting is possible.

To prevent a recurrence of these accidents, the operator has taken the following actions:

1. Periodic inspections of the compressor installation for gas leaks.
2. Piped gas starter exhaust vents above platform to a safe area for release.

[signed] D.W. Solanas

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Operations Support

Gulf of Mexico Area