



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

Notice No. 089

November 15, 1979

Safety Alert

Blowout and Fire -- 8 Fatalities

A blowout and fire occurred recently on an offshore platform drilling rig.

The operator had been experiencing problems with lost circulation, well control, and stuck drillpipe while drilling at 14,615 feet with casing set at 12,777 feet. The drillpipe had been backed off at 12,687 feet and the well was being circulated prior to pulling the drillpipe when it began flowing. Flow from the casing was stopped by closing the blowout preventers but flow through the drillpipe started because the drillpipe safety valve and standpipe valve could not be closed. The well continued to flow back through the mud system piping, unloading the drillpipe. A very rapid increase in pressure opened a relief valve in the mud piping system allowing gas to vent at the mud tanks. The rig was engulfed in a cloud of gas in a matter of only a few seconds and orders were given for personnel to evacuate the rig. The gas subsequently ignited and eight men lost their lives in the ensuing fire. The fire was extinguished the following day, but the well was not brought under control until six weeks later. The rig was a total loss and there was moderate damage to the platform. There was no pollution.

To prevent a recurrence of this accident, the operator will perform more extensive pressure testing of the equipment and piping from the mud pumps to the lower kelly valve when testing the BOP's, standpipe valve, and choke manifold.

[signed] D.W. Solanas

Oil and Gas Supervisor

Operations Support

Gulf of Mexico Area