



# Gulf of Mexico Oil Production Platform: Discharge Activities

April 17, 2015

Fiscal Year 2015 Report to Congress



Homeland  
Security

*U.S. Coast Guard*

# Foreword

April 17, 2015

I am pleased to present the following report, “Gulf of Mexico Oil Production Platform: Discharge Activities,” as prepared by the U.S. Coast Guard.

This document has been compiled pursuant to a requirement in Senate Report 113-198, which accompanies the *Fiscal Year 2015 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act* (P.L. 114-4). Senate Report 113-198 directs the Commandant to provide a summary of all oil response activities related to discharge from a production platform in the Gulf of Mexico that are ongoing or completed within the prior 3 years.



Pursuant to congressional requirements, this report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable John R. Carter  
Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

I am happy to answer any further questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 372-4411 or the Department’s Chief Financial Officer, Chip Fulghum, at (202) 447-5751.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul F. Zukunft". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul F. Zukunft  
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard  
Commandant



# Gulf of Mexico Oil Production Platform: Discharge Activities

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# I. Legislative Language

This report responds to language set forth in Senate Report 113-198 accompanying the *Fiscal Year 2015 Department of Homeland Security Appropriation Act* (P.L. 114-4), which states:

## OIL SPILL RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

No later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this act, the Coast Guard is to provide the Committee with a summary of all oil response activities related to discharge from a production platform in the Gulf of Mexico that are ongoing or completed within the prior 3 years.

## II. Discussion

The *Federal Water Pollution Control Act*, as promulgated in the National Contingency Plan, designates the Coast Guard as the lead federal agency for directing response actions during oil spills in the waters and adjoining shorelines of the coastal zone.

Federal regulations require notification to the Coast Guard when an oil discharge or potential discharge has occurred within the coastal zone of the United States. These notifications are often received by the National Response Center (NRC) and then relayed to the appropriate Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) on the basis of the incident location. Upon receipt of the discharge notification from the NRC, or other means, the FOSC or the FOSC's designated representative will investigate the report to ensure proper response operations have been initiated to mitigate impacts from the spill. If the incident falls within the Coast Guard's jurisdiction, on the basis of product discharge and incident location, the FOSC conducts an investigation to identify the responsible party and ensure all removal and mitigation actions are appropriate.

The Coast Guard can access the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to pay for a spill response when the responsible party is not able to be determined or when the responsible party is unwilling to fund the removal and mitigation actions. In cases where the responsible party is able to fund the response actions, the Coast Guard serves in an oversight role to ensure adequate actions are taken. The Coast Guard can also use its cutter fleet, boat stations, and aviation assets to assess an incident.

Discharges originating from fixed, oil-platform facilities that involve a Coast Guard response are minimal when compared to the Coast Guard's annual total oil spill responses. The Coast Guard maintains the record from each discharge response and investigation within its Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) database. From 2012–2014, MISLE reported 1,465 oil discharges or potential discharges from fixed platform facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. Table 1 displays the annual breakdown of incident investigation activities over a 3-year period for oil discharges from a fixed platform facility in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Table 1: Platform Discharges in the Gulf of Mexico that Required a Coast Guard Incident Investigation Activity by Calendar Year.**

2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
525	523	417	1,465

Most of the platform facility discharges are small (less than 100 gallons). Table 2 displays the number of discharges on the basis of the amount of oil released into the environment. From 2012–2014, there were 1,438 spills that were less than 100 gallons and 24 spills between 100–1,000 gallons. The Gulf of Mexico experienced three

discharges from platforms that exceeded 1,000 gallons. The Coast Guard provided substantial investigation and response efforts to each of these three incidents. The responsible parties funded the removal and mitigation actions caused by their discharge for each of these incidents. Coast Guard FOSCs have ensured an adequate response by monitoring the continued actions by the responsible party with on-scene personnel and over flights from Coast Guard assets.

The data from the last 3 years indicate a downward trend in platform discharges. The Coast Guard will continue to monitor this trend, evaluate actions derived from lessons learned from the Deepwater Horizon spill, and assess changes in capabilities and policies to develop more effective response techniques and planning scenarios.

**Table 2: Platform Discharges in the Gulf of Mexico that Required a Coast Guard Incident Investigation Activity by Spilled Amount.**

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>&lt; 100 Gallons *</b>	515	513	410	<b>1,438</b>
<b>100–1,000 Gallons</b>	9	10	5	<b>24</b>
<b>&gt; 1,000 Gallons</b>	1	0	2	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	525	523	417	<b>1,465</b>

\* This spill category includes 19 incidents in which the spill quantity was unknown.