



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

NEWS RELEASE

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MMS to Review Air Emissions for NO_x In the Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area

The Minerals Management Service (MMS), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announced today that it will begin preparing an environmental assessment concerning the impact of offshore oil and gas operations on air quality from Alabama to the Louisiana-Texas line. Before it does that, the Department of the Interior Agency is taking comments on a proposed regulatory approach, said Regional Director Chris Oynes.

According to MMS, atmospheric modeling has shown that total NO_x emissions from offshore oil and gas operations are in excess of the allowed 1 microgram per cubic meter on annual average along the Louisiana coast.

When onshore concentrations of NO₂ from offshore operations, either individually or as a group, exceed 1 microgram per cubic meter, MMS officials must determine whether emission controls are necessary. If they are, then oil and gas operators are required to adopt the "best available control technology" (BACT) to reduce those impacts. MMS has issued a draft regulatory approach (a draft Notice to Lessees) that would require the use of BACT on all leases and installations in the Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area. Oil and gas companies may choose any number of ways to meet the BACT requirement, but one common way they may choose is to adjust the injection timing on diesel engines by three degrees.

The public comment period opens today and runs through September 7 this year. After that, MMS will consider those comments in writing an environmental assessment, the draft of which will be available in November 1998. The final environmental assessment is scheduled to be released in January 1999.

The MMS is the Federal agency that manages the Nation's oil and gas and other mineral resources on the OCS and collects, accounts for and last year disbursed about \$6 billion in revenues from Federal offshore leases and Federal and Indian onshore mineral leases.

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