

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Office of Communications**

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NEWS RELEASE

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MMS PUBLISHES OFFSHORE VIOLATIONS SUMMARY

Today, the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) published in the Federal Register a summary of civil penalties paid last year by oil and natural gas companies for violations occurring in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The summary identifies the company name, the specific offshore activity in violation of the law, and the fine paid. The total penalty amount paid in 1998 by 27 companies was \$1,297,200.

The MMS is responsible for ensuring safe and clean offshore operations in the OCS. The civil penalty process is designed to encourage companies to comply with the statutes and regulations by pursuing, assessing, and collecting penalties. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 expanded and strengthened MMS's authority to impose penalties for violating its regulations. Section 8201 of the Act gives the Secretary of the Interior the authority to assess a civil penalty without providing notice and time for corrective action where a failure to comply with applicable regulations results in a threat of serious, irreparable, or immediate harm or damage to human life or the environment.

Since 1990, MMS has initiated 250 civil penalty reviews and collected more than \$2,678,020.

An update of the civil penalties list and other information is posted on the MMS webpage at <http://www.mms.gov> under Managing Offshore Resources-National-Inspection and Enforcement Activities.

MMS is the Federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil, and other mineral resources including sand on the OCS, and last year, collected and disbursed about \$6 billion in revenues from offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

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