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MMS Publishes Proposed Rule to Improve Workers' Safety

The Minerals Management Service has published a proposed rule to improve safety for workers during modifications or repairs to pipelines on the outer continental shelf. The proposed rule is published in today's [Federal Register](#).

"This rulemaking continues MMS' long-term efforts to protect pipeline workers and prevent pollution," said Tom Kitsos, MMS acting director. "After a pipeline has been in service for a significant time, we need to be able to pay specific attention to overall maintenance of this aging infrastructure. This rule will allow us to have better oversight of work procedures and practices for modification or repair work on offshore pipelines, and allow us to keep the energy flowing to the public from our offshore reserves."

The rule will require lessees and pipeline right-of-way holders to consider and submit in writing the measures they plan to take and the procedures they plan to follow to ensure the safety of company or contract workers and to prevent pollution before beginning a pipeline modification or repair. The rule applies only to those modifications or repairs that involve cutting into, or opening a pipeline at a flange.

Under the proposed rule, three requirements would have to be met. First, operators would have to consider the operating history of the pipeline segment to be modified or repaired, including past modifications or repairs and operating conditions specific to that segment. Second, they would ensure that measures be taken to adequately purge that segment of pressure differentials, hydrogen sulfide, and combustibles immediately before conducting a major modification or repair to the line. Third, they would have to provide procedures and safeguards to ensure that the segment remained isolated during the entire modification or repair procedure so that company and contract workers would not be endangered by pressure, hydrogen sulfide, or combustibles.

The comment period on the proposed rule closes Oct. 29, 2001.

MMS is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf in federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for and disburses mineral revenues from federal and Indian leases. These collections totaled nearly \$8 billion last year and more than \$110 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and federal park and recreation lands.

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MMS Internet website address: <http://www.mms.gov>