

THE NEWS ROOM

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UPDATE: BOEMRE Continuing to Respond to Natural Gas Leak in the Gulf of Mexico

NEW ORLEANS – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) is continuing to oversee Apache Corp.'s source control efforts for a natural gas leak near East Cameron Block 278 Platform B. The platform is located approximately 93 miles offshore Louisiana, south of Lake Charles, in about 173 feet of water. The platform, which has not been in production for nearly a decade, is currently used to process natural gas and condensate from other facilities.

Well control procedures from the platform are believed to have significantly reduced the amount of natural gas flowing from the well. Once Apache has confirmation that the source of the leak is under control, work to permanently plug the well will begin. BOEMRE has approved the revised permit to modify the well which includes the plugging operation.

With BOEMRE's approval and after several safety system evaluations, Apache personnel re-boarded the platform January 19 and began work to kill the leaking well. BOEMRE engineers reviewed and approved the well control procedures to be used from the platform. A remotely operated vehicle (ROV) is continuously monitoring well site conditions to ensure that the work can proceed safely.

In accordance with BOEMRE's direction, Apache moved a jack-up rig, Hercules 200, on location January 23 to drill a relief well in the event that the source control procedures from the platform are not successful. The rig is currently installing structural casing, the preliminary step in preparing the area for drilling.

A BOEMRE Lake Charles District engineer initially received the report of a potential leak on January 16, at approximately 10 a.m. According to Apache's report, the operator was in the process of permanently plugging its associated non-producing natural gas wells when workers spotted what appeared to be natural gas bubbling to the surface near the platform. The platform was safely evacuated and the associated pipelines and facilities have been successfully shut in.

BOEMRE inspectors confirmed the bubbling and discolored water initially found near the platform has significantly decreased. The discolored water may be a mixture of sediment from the ocean floor, gas, and formation water. Oil is not believed to be present other than in small amounts of condensate, which quickly evaporates.

BOEMRE has notified other agencies and is continuing to closely oversee the situation. BOEMRE will also conduct an investigation of the incident

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