



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

---

***NEWS RELEASE***

---

**FOR RELEASE:**

March 17, 2000

**CONTACT:** A.B. Wade  
(202) 208-3985

**\$749,000 PAID IN OCS CIVIL PENALTIES LAST YEAR**

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has published a summary of civil penalties totaling \$749,000, paid from January 1, 1999-December 31, 1999. The assessed penalties were for violations that occurred in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The summary highlights the identity of the party, the regulation violated, and the amount paid. The summary was published in the *Federal Register* on March 9, 2000.

For this period, penalties ranged from a low of \$3,000, for a company's failure to test gas-detection systems, to a high of \$165,000 assessed to a company for not equipping a drilling unit with a proper safety device.

The civil penalty process is designed to encourage companies to comply with the statutes and regulations by pursuing, assessing, and collecting penalties. The penalties summary provides information to the public on violations of special concern in OCS operations and provides an additional incentive for safe and environmentally sound operations.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 expanded MMS' authority to impose penalties for violating its regulations. Section 8201 of OPA 90 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior 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.

Between August 18, 1990, and December 31, 1999, MMS initiated 297 civil penalty reviews, which resulted in 297 civil penalty cases; assessed 186 civil penalties; and collected over \$3,539,520 in fines.

A quarterly update of this list and additional information will be posted on the MMS webpage at <http://www.mms.gov>. The civil penalties update is located under "Offshore Program, Civil Penalties."

MMS is the Federal agency that manages the Nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources including sand on the OCS, and collects, accounts for and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

**-MMS-**

MMS Internet website address: <http://www.mms.gov>  
24 hour Fax-on-Demand Service:(202) 219-1703