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\$500,000 AWARDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF MMS' SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

An initiative of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) got a boost from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today with the announcement that DOE has awarded \$500,000 to Taylor Energy of New Orleans, LA to document procedures and costs associated with developing and implementing a Safety and Environmental Management Plan (SEMP).

"The SEMP program is intended to reduce the risk and occurrence of accidents, injuries, and pollution from offshore operations by incorporating safety management practices into facility activities and business practices," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "Additionally, implementing SEMP as a voluntary standard, developed by industry, is a much favorable alternative to federal regulations."

DOE funded the contract to support SEMP, which is consistent with the Domestic Natural Gas and Oil Initiative objectives to streamline and improve environmental regulations. Taylor Energy will develop their SEMP plan over the next 30 months. The effort will conclude with a workshop jointly sponsored by DOE and MMS that will highlight the findings.

MMS introduced the SEMP program and requested public comments in a Federal Register notice published on July 2, 1991. In response, the American Petroleum Institute (API) and Offshore Operators Committee (OCC), with MMS participation, developed Recommended Practices for Development of a Safety and Environmental Management Program for Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Operations and Facilities, known as RP 75. RP 75 addresses the identification and management of safety and environmental hazards in design, construction, startup, operation, inspection and maintenance of new, existing or modified drilling and production facilities. On June 30, 1994, MMS published a Federal Register notice requesting that industry voluntarily adopt API's recommended practice.

"If successfully implemented across the offshore natural gas and oil industry, SEMP will provide an alternative approach to improving safety and environmental protection outside of

traditional regulations. The results of Taylor Energy's work will be helpful to other offshore petroleum companies who are developing SEMP plans," said Quarterman.

"We will continue to monitor industry's progress in order to decide whether API's recommended practice will accomplish the goals of SEMP," Quarterman said. "MMS is also planning to participate with companies in collaborative reviews of their SEMP plans. Input from MMS will be used by companies in fine-tuning their plans."

MMS is the federal agency that manages and regulates the nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects and distriburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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