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**MMS ISSUES FINAL RULE ON BLOWOUT PREVENTER
TESTING REQUIREMENTS**

Today, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) issued a final rule amending the testing requirements for Blow Out Preventer (BOP) systems used in offshore oil and natural gas drilling and completion operations.

The MMS estimates that the revised testing requirements could save industry \$35 to \$46 million a year without compromising safety. Under the rule, a company may take up to 14 days between BOP pressure tests. Previously, tests were required at least every 7 days. The agency based the final rule on the results of a study that concluded there is no statistical difference in failure rates for BOP systems tested on a 0-to-7 day interval with those tested on a 8-to-14 day interval.

The MMS worked with representatives from the American Petroleum Institute, Independent Petroleum Association of America, International Association of Drilling Contractors, National Ocean Industries Association, and Offshore Operators Committee in setting parameters for the study.

MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman remarked, "We are very pleased with the results of this cooperative effort with the oil and gas industry. It is a good example of our commitment to work with industry to make sure that our regulatory requirements are based on the best scientific information available and are carried out in the most efficient way possible. The Government's goals for a high level of safety and environmental performance are met and industry's costs are reduced. A win-win for all concerned."

The rule becomes effective on June 30, 1998.

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

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