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MMS Publishes Rule Requiring Electronic Reporting

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service published final regulations in today's *Federal Register* that require companies to submit royalty and production reports electronically. The regulations also extend the due date for production reports filed electronically and eliminate reporting on most wells that are in drilling status.

The rule becomes effective on November 1, 1999. As of that date, MMS will require electronic filing of the Report of Sales and Royalty Remittance (Form MMS-2014), and the Oil and Gas Operations Report (Form MMS-4054).

"MMS has been developing and successfully using electronic information collection alternatives for several years. Electronic filing of royalty and production reports will move those transactions out of a paper world into a more timely, accurate, and significantly less costly one," said MMS Director Walt Rosenbusch. Paper reports are costly for the federal government and taxpayers because they are manually keyed in, filed, boxed, and stored.

In response to public comments, MMS will allow some exceptions to the electronic reporting requirements and has established a timetable that will phase small businesses into electronic reporting over the next several years. This should provide small businesses time to make operational changes necessary to comply with the electronic reporting requirements.

Several electronic reporting and transmission options are available to companies, and MMS can provide a list of third-party reporting services to reporters not using computers.

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