

MMS Makes Changes to Assure Improved Training for Outer Continental Shelf Workers

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) published a final rule in the Federal Register that becomes effective today which will assure improved training of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) workers. This rule clarifies the intent of the OCS training requirements and is an example of the importance that MMS places on safety.

The MMS commitment to production safety includes measures, practices, procedures, and equipment to ensure safe, accident-free, and pollution-free production operations, as well as installation, repair, testing, maintenance, and operation of surface and sub-surface safety devices. Offshore workers and industry personnel must understand safety training regulations dealing with production and drilling operations. Most industry training focused primarily on surface and sub-surface safety equipment testing and installation and reporting requirements, so MMS developed and implemented a pilot testing program from November 2008 through January 2009 to evaluate other equally important aspects of offshore oil and gas production operations. Written production tests were designed for lessee and contract personnel involved with OCS production safety operations to evaluate their understanding of basic production safety devices and additional areas of production operations, including separation, dehydration, compression, sweetening, and metering. All personnel passed the tests, but problem areas were identified that validated concerns about knowledge of the other components of production operations.

"We have made these changes to the training regulations in the final rule to ensure that MMS regulations are understood and to emphasize the importance MMS places on safety", said MMS Associate Director, Offshore Energy and Minerals Management Chris Oynes. "We will conduct periodic training and assess training needs for lessees, operators, and contract personnel so field personnel will be fully aware of the training program requirements and the importance of meeting compliance needs."

This rule makes technical changes to production measurement and operator training requirements. The final rule will provide a built-in waiver to certain production measurement reporting requirements, and clarify the intent of the OCS training requirements. These revisions will give the lessees relief from some reporting requirements in the event of a hurricane or other incident beyond their control. The final rule can be found at: <http://www.mms.gov/federalregister/2009.htm#2009FinalRules>.

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