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OIL SPILL TESTING PROGRAM RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

Today, two employees of the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service, Jim Lane and Joe Mullin, received the Secretary of Transportation Team Award for their important role in testing a new pumping system for highly viscous oil. The tests were conducted at the MMS oil spill testing facility known as Ohmsett, located in Leonardo, New Jersey. It is operated for the MMS by MAR, Inc., also an award recipient.

The need for an innovative pumping system was recognized following difficulties in removing fuel oil from the grounded tanker "New Carissa" off the Oregon coast and more recently the "Erica" tanker spill off France. Pumping thick, heavy fuel and crude oils can be very difficult when they reach high viscosities, particularly in cold water. This is a problem during oil recovery operations in many cold weather areas and almost a year round concern in Alaska's Beaufort Sea.

The U.S. Coast Guard, in partnership with 38 government and industry organizations, developed new pumping techniques and equipment to address this problem. Much of the research and development work was demonstrated during testing at Ohmsett. The results have been highlighted in several recent publications.

MMS Director Walt Rosenbusch commented, "I am extremely proud of the contributions made by Mr. Lane and Mr. Mullin in this successful partnership project. Conducting oil spill response testing at Ohmsett directly supports the MMS goal of ensuring that the best available oil spill detection, containment, and removal technologies are available to protect the U.S. coastal and ocean environment from spills."

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses an average over \$5 billion per year in revenues from federal offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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