



## BP's Deepwater Oil Spill - Stack Off, but Another Incident - and Open Thread

Posted by [Heading Out](#) on September 2, 2010 - 11:54pm

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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Once again I am indebted to [MoonofA](#), who is giving a more detailed hour by hour report, of some of the incidents that I miss. Fairly rapidly on Thursday afternoon, the team of ROVs and surface vessels moved forward with the removal of the existing infrastructure over the Deepwater Horizon well, with the intent of replacing it all with a functioning blowout preventer from the 2nd relief well (which now looks to be no longer necessary at all). One of the first steps was to move the methanol feed (used to dissolve and remove hydrates from the internal structures of the stack) down from the rams of the top stack to feed into the original BOP. This was used to ensure that the different parts of the stack, such as the rams, were able to function, when needed. And now, I presume, the hope is that it will similarly ensure that the BOP rams can function if needed.



*Removing the line from the stack*



*Replacing line on the BOP*

Once the feed line had been moved, then the Enterprise came in and lowered the latching device that has been floating just above the stack for the past few days. It did not take long (and by doing so did not convey the difficulty) to drop the cap over the top end of the stack, and not long thereafter the stack was released and lifted away from the underlying transition and the original BOP.



*Approaching the stack*

The more interesting part of the exercise will come when they start to lift the original BOP and the transition spool. There are a number of different scenarios that have been proposed, depending on what happens, and why, as the first lift begins. If they can lift the BOP with the

underlying drill pipe (DP) still attached, then they appear ready to grab hold of the DP after the BOP has risen a short distance, and cut it off. This will make it easier to get the BOP to the surface, and means that a more conventional fishing tool can be used to capture, and bring up the remaining length of the DP. [Toolpush](#), for example, mentions some of the options available.



*Sliding into place*

The capping stack was released at about 4:30 pm Central, whereupon Admiral Allen issued the [following statement](#):

"Under the direction of the federal science team and U.S. government engineers, BP has completed the capping stack removal procedure – an important step in the process to remove and preserve the damaged BOP. This procedure was undertaken in accordance with specific conditions I set forth in a directive authorizing the capping stack removal and BOP replacement last week. BP will continue to follow these required conditions for the BOP removal procedure, which is expected to commence this evening. I will continue to provide updates as necessary."

One of the problems with the feeds from the Q4000 is that they are not time-stamped, so that it is hard to know if the latest glance at the feed below the moon pool, which shows that the pipe hasn't moved since I last looked, is current or not.

### **Another Incident: Mariner Energy Platform Fire**

The other significant news today was of the [fire on the Mariner Energy platform](#) in the Vermillion block of the Gulf of Mexico. The fire now appears out and there was apparently no leakage from the wells that were connected to the platform. The platform is in 340 ft of water, and was [fed by 7 wells](#) collectively supplying 1,400 bd of oil and 9.2 mcf of natural gas, that is now shut in.

I note that they were apparently water-blasting the rig and repainting it. One of the things to be

careful of in those cases is the [static electric charge](#) that can build up in water vapor around the operation. From the Coast Guard report:

A number of serious accidents occurred when very large crude carriers (VLCC) first came into service in 1969 (MACTRA, MARPESSA, KONG HAAKON IV). Water washing techniques then in use caused the generation of large static charges in the cargo tanks, whose unprecedented size was a causal factor. Oil shippers took steps to control the atmosphere in the tanks by either 1) careful stripping and gas freeing or 2) assuring an over-rich mixture in the tanks. The problem in this particular sector has been largely eliminated by the use of crude oil washing (COW) techniques or of smaller water washing machines.

More recently, several tanker and tank barge explosions in which static discharge was a probable cause have refocused attention on the mechanisms of electrostatic discharge and the applicable safety standards. The SURF CITY, FIONA, AMERICAN EAGLE, CIBRO SAVANNAH (barge), tank barge TT 103, tank barge STC 410, and the tank barge Hollywood 1034 accidents each offered safety lessons to be (re)learned. In most cases, routine cargo tank operations such as loading, stripping, or cleaning were underway.

Correspondence with industry representatives has revealed a history of accidents caused by electrostatic discharge in tank trucks (particularly at loading racks) and storage tanks. One expert said that chemical storage tanks in particular have many static related explosions. Publicly available information on these incidents is, however, scant.

However, at this time, that is just conjecture, and we will have to see what the investigation reveals.



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