

MEMORANDUM

To: Director, MMS

From: Secretary

Re: Suspension of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Drilling of New Deepwater Wells

Date: May 28, 2010

The recent blow-out and oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is new evidence of the serious risks associated with deepwater drilling, and presents new challenges for the Department to assure the American public that OCS deepwater drilling can be accomplished in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

Yesterday, I presented recommendations to the President based on a 30-day review of the BP Explosion and Oil Spill that began on April 20, 2010. Based on that review, the recommendations contained in the report to the President, and further evaluation of the issue, I find at this time and under current conditions that offshore drilling of new deepwater wells poses an unacceptable threat of serious and irreparable harm to wildlife and the marine, coastal, and human environment as that is specified in 30 C.F.R. 250.172(b). I also have determined that the installation of additional safety or environmental protection equipment is necessary to prevent injury or loss of life and damage to property and the environment. 30 C.F.R. 250.172(c).

Therefore, I am directing a six month suspension of all pending, current, or approved offshore drilling operations of new deepwater wells in the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific regions. This suspension does not apply to drilling operations that are necessary to conduct emergency activities, such as the drilling operations related to the ongoing BP oil spill. For those operators who are currently drilling new deepwater wells, they shall halt drilling activity at the first safe and controlled stopping point and take all necessary steps to close the well. In addition, MMS shall not process any new applications for permits to drill consistent with this directive. All applicable regulations shall apply to the implementation of this directive.

Please ensure that appropriate Letters of Suspension and any other appropriate documentation, including any additional instructions and details regarding this directive, are sent to all affected lessees, owners, and operators immediately.

