

FOR RELEASE: January 19, 1993      CONTACT: Carter Cornick  
(202) 208-3983

## MMS SETS INTERIM FINAL RULE; OFFSHORE OPERATORS IN STATE WATERS MUST HAVE SPILL RESPONSE PLANS

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) issued today their Interim Final Rule to require spill response plans from producers operating in state and federal waters. The interim rule offers guidance to operators who must submit spill response and contingency plans by February 18, 1993, as required by the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) of 1990.

"MMS was assigned spill prevention and contingency planning responsibility for all offshore oil and gas facilities, including those in state waters, after President Bush issued an Executive Order (E.O. 12777) pursuant to OPA," said MMS Director Scott Sewell. "By issuing this interim rule, MMS fulfills its obligations under the law, while not unduly binding the incoming Administration."

The OPA established a February 18, 1993, deadline for submission of spill response plans. After that date, a facility cannot handle, store, or transport oil unless a response plan has been received by MMS.

"There are about 1200 production facilities in state waters that need to have spill response plans on file either with the State governments or MMS," Sewell continued, "and we expect that by the February 18 deadline all operators will be in compliance."

Sewell noted that MMS estimates showed that approximately 550 plans had to be submitted by the deadline to prevent premature shut-down, which is required in cases where the operator fails to produce a spill response plan.

"We are confident that all offshore operators in state waters will have their plans submitted," said Sewell. About 95 percent of the 1200 operators affected are in the Gulf of Mexico, and in the last year both Louisiana and Texas have taken steps to ensure that operators off their shores are in compliance with the law."

In 1991 the Texas Legislature passed a law that required their operators to file spill response and contingency plans. In December, 1992, Louisiana notified all lessees that their plans, if not already submitted, should be on file with MMS by the February

1993, deadline.

MMS published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to solicit information concerning oil spill prevention and response requirements in the Federal Register on August 12, 1992.

MMS administers federal offshore mineral programs and manages the federal mineral royalty program. MMS is committed to achieving the appropriate balance between protecting the environment and providing opportunities for the discovery and recovery of critical energy resources such as natural gas and oil.

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