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MMS Technical News

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT
Nicolette Nye, 703/787-1011

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MMS Incorporates Recommended Practice for Cementing Shallow Water Flows

Rule Effective March 30, 2007

WASHINGTON -- A final rule published in the Federal Register February 28, 2007 will give oil and gas operators on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) options of best cementing practices available to help mitigate shallow water flow (SWF) hazards in deep water areas. The rule incorporates by reference into Minerals Management Service (MMS) regulations the First Edition of the American Petroleum Institute's Recommended Practice for Cementing Shallow Water Flow Zones in Deep Water Wells (API RP 65). The rule becomes effective March 30, 2007.

A SWF is the influx of water or sediment into or around a wellbore following the penetration of an abnormally pressured geologic formation. From 1987 to 2004, at least 113 OCS wells encountered SWF. While the majority of these wells experienced SWF to only a minor degree, there were instances of severe encounters resulting in abandonment of well sites and loss of wells. MMS and industry groups recognized the safety and environmental consequences resulting from shallow water flow encounters, and worked together to develop recommended cementing practices.

MMS published a proposed rule on May 22, 2006 which solicited public comment on incorporating API RP 65. The public comment period ended on July 21, 2006. MMS received six comments on the proposed rule from companies or organizations working in the oil and gas industry, including ExxonMobil, BP, Devon, BJ Services Company, Schlumberger, and the Offshore Operators Committee.

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