



Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

SAFETY ALERT

Safety Alert No. 513

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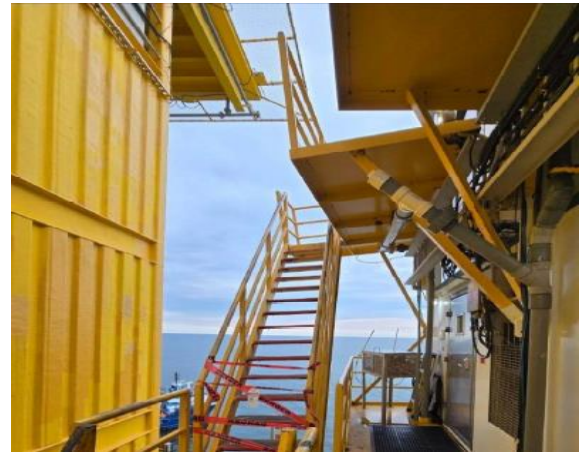
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Exterior Walkway Separates from Temporary Living Quarters, Putting Workers at Risk



Walkway separated outward from temporary living quarters, exposing a significant gap.



View from below of walkway shifted outward from temporary living quarters, revealing a significant gap.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement's Gulf of America Region investigated an incident involving a third-floor walkway outside temporary living quarters on an offshore platform.

Incident: Three workers were standing on an external third-floor walkway outside of their room located on the platform's temporary living quarters when the walkway detached from the structure. Two of the workers were able to open the door and returned inside their room. The third worker moved away from the detached section while remaining on the walkway. After the crew confirmed all workers were safe, personnel secured the stairway and walkway with chain bindings to prevent dropped objects and further movement.

Findings: The operator installed the living quarters as a temporary structure designed for removal or dismantling. (The quarters remained in service for 23 years.) As such, the operator's inspections did not account for the structure's age or the offshore environment. Inspection criteria did not address corrosion, fatigue or age-related deterioration of welds.

Contributing Factors:

- **Design not intended for long-term service:** The living quarters were built as temporary housing for overflow workers but remained in place for 23 years.
- **Inspections were not adequate:** The operator relied on visual inspections only. Those inspections did not verify the condition of the tab welds connecting the walkway to the living quarters.
- **Insufficient structural support:** The welded tabs at the walkway connection points did not provide enough welded surface for support. The stairway's south side lacked support, which may have increased stress and contributed to the failure.
- **Marine environment and aging:** Corrosion and age-related fatigue affected the tab welds over time.
- **Inspection management weaknesses:** The operator used inspection criteria based on the structure's original "temporary" intent. Visual inspections did not identify hazards related to structural support of the living quarters and walkways.

To help prevent similar incidents in the future, BSEE recommends that operators and their contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:

- Design and build temporary structures with potential long-term use in mind.
- Update inspection programs for temporary living quarters and similar installations to address marine corrosion, fatigue, weld condition and structural integrity.
- Use non-destructive testing with visual inspections, such as ultrasonic testing, to evaluate weld thickness and detect structural degradation.

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A Safety Alert is a tool used by BSEE to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that could assist avoiding potential incidents on the Outer Continental Shelf.

CATEGORY: Personnel Safety; Living Quarters