



MARINE MINERALS ADMINISTRATION SAFETY ALERT

Safety Alert No. 521
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Control Portable Electronic Device Use to Prevent Ignition Hazards Offshore

Background:

Recent Marine Minerals Administration inspections identified unsafe use of portable electronic devices (PEDs) – including pagers, cell phones, cameras, video equipment, and radios – in hazardous areas offshore.

During one inspection, MMA observed a wireline operator using a cellphone on a mobile offshore drilling unit during active wireline operations. This use violated facility safety procedures and resulted in an Incident of Non-Compliance.

In another inspection, MMA observed portable electronic devices that were not rated for hazardous locations in a Class 1, Division 2 hazardous area, and no hot work permit had been issued.

MMA emphasizes the importance of not using cell phones and other portable electronic devices during active operations unless their use is authorized and controlled. Portable electronic devices that are not properly rated for hazardous locations can create ignition hazards and should not be used without proper safeguards.

Therefore, MMA recommends that operators and their contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:

- Prohibit portable electronic device use in hazardous areas unless devices are certified as intrinsically safe¹ for the applicable class and division.
- Reinforce adherence to portable electronic device policies during facility orientations, and prior to safety-critical operations.

¹ Intrinsically Safe: A method of protection in which electrical equipment is designed so that any spark or thermal effect produced under normal or fault conditions is incapable of igniting a specified flammable gas or vapor mixture. Intrinsically safe equipment is evaluated and certified for use in specific hazardous (classified) locations based on the applicable Class, Division, and Gas Group, in accordance with ANSI/UL 913 and the National Electrical Code (NEC) Article 504. For offshore applications, refer to API RP 14F for guidance on the selection and installation of electrical equipment in classified areas.

- Require Hot Work Permits when portable electronic device use cannot be avoided in hazardous areas, consistent with API RP 14F (§12.3 and §12.9) and API 500.
- Review company policies for portable electronic device usage and ensure they comply with 30 CFR 250.114 and API 14F standards.
- Ensure offshore installation managers and company representatives understand hazardous area classification, portable electronic device ignition hazards, and proper installation and operating permit requirements.

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As of July 10, 2026, the Department of Interior has reunified the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement into the Marine Minerals Administration, which will oversee the responsible development of the nation's offshore energy and marine mineral resources with an integrated focus on safety, environmental protection and efficient oversight. For more information, visit [Transition to the Marine Minerals Administration | U.S. Department of the Interior](#).



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