



MARINE MINERALS ADMINISTRATION SAFETY ALERT

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Segregate Pyrotechnics and Verify Flare Type Before Emergency Drills



Figure 1: Parachute Flare

Background

The Marine Minerals Administration Gulf of America Region recently investigated an incident in which a worker sustained second-degree burns during a Fast Rescue Craft (FRC) training exercise.

During the exercise, a participant mistakenly activated a parachute flare (Fig. 1) instead of a handheld flare. The parachute flare was oriented toward individual when it was activated, resulting in burn injuries. The parachute flare was being used during the drill as part of an offshore expending activity.

Findings

The Marine Minerals Administration found that several factors contributed to the incident:

- **Inadequate hazard identification:** The pre-job planning focused on fast rescue craft operations and did not fully address the hazards associated with handling, selecting and activating pyrotechnic devices.
- **Inadequate risk assessment:** The activity did not include a formal, task-specific risk assessment for offshore flare deployment or expending pyrotechnics.
- **Improper storage or segregation:** Different types of pyrotechnic devices were mixed, which increased the likelihood of selecting the wrong device.
- **Failure to follow procedures:** Procedures and instructions were available but were not followed before and during the exercise.
- **Insufficient training or experience:** The injured individual had limited experience with the task and did not receive required pre-task training before participating.

To help prevent similar incidents, the Marine Minerals Administration recommends that operators and their contractors, as appropriate, consider the following:

- Due to onshore disposal requirements, identify methods or processes to eliminate offshore expending of pyrotechnics.
- Seek alternatives to pyrotechnics at fixed facilities that offer enhanced safety to personnel without the reduction in life safety equipment requirements such as already available installed alternatives such as VHF radios; emergency position-indicating radio beacons, or EPIRBs; search and rescue transponders, or SARTS; etc.
- Evaluate the utility of pyrotechnic devices given floating offshore facilities are in well-known locations that are quickly and readily accessible to rescue resources.
- Determine if high-intensity, short-duration homing capability of a traditional pyrotechnic device are redundant when compared to the persistent signaling and precision of modern digital systems like emergency position-indicating radio beacons, or EPIRBs; search and rescue transponders, or SARTS; automatic identification system, or AIS; and VHF radios with digital selective calling, or VHF-DSCs; that are already provided on these facilities.
- Strengthen risk assessment and task-specific controls during emergency drills for all steps involved in performing a specific task.
- Ensure proper labeling exists on any flares to limit the likelihood of an individual firing in the wrong direction.
- Ensure instruction(s) and procedure(s) are clear and acknowledged by all participants before starting an exercise or drill.

- At offshore locations, improve training, procedural adherence, and pyrotechnic segregation practices.

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A Safety Alert is a tool used by the Marine Minerals Administration 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.

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](#).

Category: Personnel Safety, Emergency Preparedness