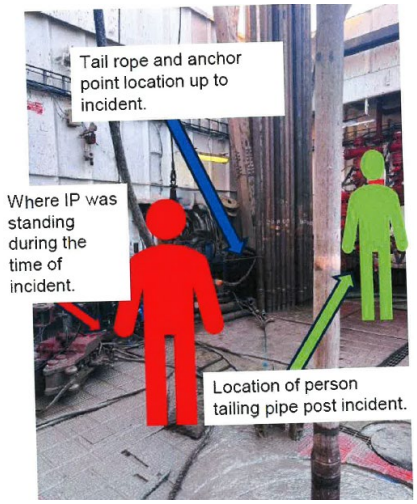
MARINE MINERALS ADMINISTRATION
SAFETY ALERT

Safety Alert No. 528
Date: Nov. 17, 2026

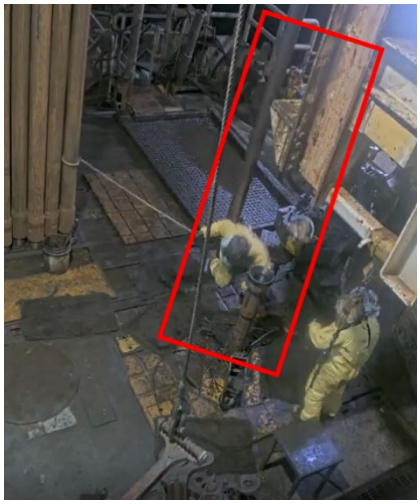
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Control Tail Ropes and Tag Lines and Verify Pipe Stands to Prevent Injuries

Recent drill pipe handling incidents highlight the hazards improperly controlled tail ropes and tag lines.



Incident 1



Incident 2

Background:

Two separate drill pipe handling incidents occurred on offshore drilling facilities in the Gulf of America. In both incidents, workers were struck and injured by drill pipe after control of drill pipe movement was lost despite the use of tail ropes or tag lines during tripping operations.

Incident 1

While the drill crew was running 4½-inch drill pipe, a worker lost grip of the tail rope that was slippery due to being covered with mud. The drill pipe swung toward the rotary and struck the worker in the face, knocking him backward. The worker sustained a facial laceration and a sinus fracture and was medically evacuated for treatment.

Incident 2

During a tripping operation, a worker attached the tail rope to the wrong stand of drill pipe, unaware that one stand remained on the driller's side. As the driller lifted the intended stand, the remaining stand moved approximately 10-15 feet and struck the worker in the back, causing him to fall. The worker was evaluated and returned to duty following a safety stand-down.

The first incident involved loss of control of a mud-covered tail rope. The second incident involved misidentification in the work area in the line of fire, and insufficient hazard identification and communication during pipe-handling operations.

Incident Findings:

- Workers positioned in the exposure path of moving drill pipe.
- Contaminated tail ropes (slippery with mud) or incorrectly attached to the wrong pipe.
- Multiple pipe stands increased the likelihood of misidentification.
- The driller and floor crew did not verify the correct pipe stand before lifting.
- Hazards associated with tail rope use were not clearly identified in Job Safety Analyses (JSAs).

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

- **Keep personnel out of all potential line-of-fire zones**
    - Evaluate pipe-handling paths and revise procedures to eliminate worker exposure to moving pipe.
- **Strengthen tail rope and tag line hazard controls**
    - Inspect ropes and replace those that are saturated, worn, or otherwise compromised.
    - Evaluate anchor point locations to ensure pipe swing paths move away from workers.
    - Consider alternative pipe-control methods where feasible.
- **Improve verification and communication protocols**
    - Confirm the correct pipe stand before lifting.
    - Reinforce communication between drillers, derrick personnel and floor crews.
- **Enhance JSAs for tripping operations**
    - Include hazards associated with tail rope use, mud saturation, and pipe swing paths.
    - Review JSAs before each operation to ensure they are current and revise them when conditions change.
- **Conduct pre-lift and pre-tour briefings to reinforce expectations**

    - Discuss work sequencing, pipe stand locations, and line-of-fire risks.
    - Encourage workers to exercise Stop Work Authority when they observe unsafe conditions or a loss of control.
- **Share lessons learned across fleets and facilities**
    - Share lessons learned with all crews performing similar work.

- MMA –

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 the 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: Rig Floor, Lifting