

Joint Information Center News Release



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Media Inquiries: (504)736-2595

Drilling of Relief Well Begins at South Timbalier 220

HOUMA, La. –The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), U.S. Coast Guard, and Walter Oil & Gas Corporation (Walter), through the Unified Command, continue to oversee and coordinate response efforts to secure the South Timbalier 220 natural gas Well A-3. Safety of personnel and protection of the environment remain the top priorities.

Drilling began on the relief well Sunday using the Rowan EXL-3 jack-up rig, contracted by Walter. Drilling is expected to continue for approximately 35 days. Many factors can affect the expected schedule including weather and the intricate work of locating the target well bore at the end of the drilling process. A relief well is drilled to intercept the target well. Once intercepted, drilling mud, followed by cement will be pumped into the well to secure it.

All available options to safely secure the natural gas well remain under consideration. Work is moving forward on all approaches. Removal of debris material surrounding the well head began Friday. This work is being conducted from the derrick barge, "Performance."

Walter is submitting procedures today for well intervention work to BSEE for review and approval. Once the procedures are approved, the work would begin if direct access to the well is available.

From visual observation, a sheen is no longer present in the area of the well. The Coast Guard continues to maintain a 500-meter safety zone around the site. Firefighting and other marine vessels remain onsite with personnel from Walter, Hercules, and other professional engineering contractors, and relevant federal agencies. BSEE's investigation into the cause of the loss of well control continues in coordination with the Coast Guard.

Additional updates will be issued as information becomes available. Media inquiries and requests for additional information should be directed to [504-736-2595](tel:504-736-2595).

BACKGROUND:

Walter experienced a loss of control of Well A-3 at approximately 8:45a.m. July 23 on an unmanned platform at South Timbalier Block 220 while doing completion work on the sidetrack well to prepare the well for production. The operator reported the safe evacuation of 44 personnel from the Hercules 265 jack-up rig. Coast Guard confirmed that the leaking natural gas ignited at 10:45 p.m. CDT July 23. BSEE confirmed July 25 that the well flow subsided after a natural bridging process and the fire was suppressed.

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