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CONTACT: John Romero
(805) 389-7520

MMS RELEASES FINAL OFFSHORE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT FROM NORTHRIDGE EARTHQUAKE (#40034)

The Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today released its final post-earthquake seismic damage assessment of natural gas and oil facilities in federal waters offshore southern California. Despite severe damage onshore, the report confirms that the network of offshore installations sustained no structural damage from the January 17 Northridge earthquake.

Directly following the quake, MMS inspected all offshore pipelines and assessed the structural and operational integrity of offshore facilities. MMS required formal surveys to be conducted by offshore operators of all platforms, pipelines, and related structures in federal waters and confirmed findings through onsite MMS inspections.

"Based on our analysis of the survey results, we are pleased to announce that platforms on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) withstood January's major earthquake in southern California with no structural damage," said MMS Director Tom Fry.

Fry also reported that safety systems on platforms offshore Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara Counties were successfully activated at the time of the initial seismic activity and production operations were suspended without major incident.

"The lack of structural damage and minimal disruption of offshore operations by the earthquake are clearly the result of proper platform design and operational procedures," said Fry. "These offshore design and safety standards, as regulated by the MMS, ensured the safety of workers and the environment at industry offshore gas and oil platforms in the Pacific."

MMS requires that a platform design anticipate severe conditions brought on by various natural occurrences. Since platforms offshore California are located in a seismically active area, requirements in the design criteria address the potential effects of earthquakes on each facility's structure. Types of required seismic data used in platform design include recurrence of seismic events, proximity to active faults, type of faulting, and

subsurface soil conditions. Other earthquake-related events such as potential liquefaction and submarine landslides are also taken into consideration in design criteria.

Offshore production platforms contain numerous safety devices required by government regulation as well as by voluntary industry procedures. Safety devices include shut-in controls which close surface and subsurface valves to immediately suspend platform production operations in the event of an emergency. In addition, fire and spill response, first aid, and personnel evacuation procedures are identified and routinely tested to ensure emergency preparedness.

Copies of the report are available on request from the MMS Pacific OCS Region office, 770 Paseo Camarillo, Camarillo, CA 93010.

The Minerals Management Service is the agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior responsible for administering the federal offshore natural gas, oil, and minerals management programs.

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