

Safety Alert

MMS

U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

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Falling Drill Pipe Causes Fatality

Recently, contract rig personnel were engaged in the task of laying down 5-1/2 inch drill pipe from the rig floor to the rig's pipe rack. The task involved moving the pipe from the mousehole to the V-door by using a nylon strap, of which one end was attached to the pipe by using a single chocker cinch; while the other end was attached to the rig floor's air hoist. As it neared the V-door, one joint of pipe, weighing approximately 600 pounds, inadvertently released from the strap, fatally striking one of the floor hands.

In an MMS investigation, it was concluded that the causes of the accident, in part, were an improperly placed strap cinch, lack of training and inexperience on part of the person responsible for cinching the strap, improper supervisory assignment of duties, the designated operator's over-reliance on the contractor's safety plan, a lack of specific safety responsibilities of the designated operator's representative on the rig, and the contractor's ineffective safety program and HSE department.

Therefore, the MMS recommends to all lessees and operators the following:

Lessees and designated operators should review the adequacy of their policies from a safety perspective regarding both the selection of contractors and the monitoring of the selected contractor's onsite performance. Policies should include a complete review and approval of the contractor's safety plan prior to the selection of the contractor.

Lessees and designated operators should communicate to their onsite representatives in writing the safety expectations of the operator and the representative's detailed safety-related responsibilities. Those responsibilities should include the monitoring of all aspects of the contractor's onsite performance. Further, the onsite representative should have the authority to enforce the designated operator's safety expectations as communicated to him.

Lessees and designated operators should insist that all personnel participating in rigging/lifting operations on their lease have formal rigger training prior to such participation.

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