



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

## Safety Alert

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### Falling Debris Causes Injury

Recently, contract rig personnel were engaged in Plug & Abandonment (P&A) operations. The task involved cutting sections of the 30-inch drive pipe away to gain access to the 20-inch casing inside the 30-inch pipe. During the process, a saddle “horseshoe” base plate was utilized to cover the opening between the 30-inch drive pipe and the rotary table. A 7-inch gap remained in the base plate and an 18”x4”x1” piece of the casing, weighing 22.4 pounds, fell through the opening. The piece of casing became lodged between the 30-inch drive pipe and the stationary diverter system, which was just below the rotary table. The remaining cut pieces of drive pipe were moved away from the rotary table. An “All Clear” was given for rig crew members to proceed down to the suspended work deck below the rig floor (Texas Deck) in order to guide the final section of casing through the opening in the Texas Deck. When the two rig crew members were in position, the driller picked up on the final section of casing which dislodged the cut piece of drive pipe causing it to fall approximately 35 feet. The falling piece of drive pipe struck one of the rig crew members on the hard hat and forehead causing serious head injury.

MMS recommends the following:

- Lessees and Operators should review their policies and Job Safety Analysis to ensure that not only personnel, but also loose materials should also be guarded from open holes and accounted for.
- With operations of this type (raising or lowering materials through an open hole), operators should examine work area periodically to ensure that no loose material is in danger of becoming a falling hazard.