Safety Alert No. 264
July 7, 2008

Contact: Alex Alvarado
(504) 736 2547

Dynamic Pipeline Riser Inspection, Maintenance, and Monitoring Records on OCS Floating Facilities

In 2004, visual inspections performed on several steel catenary riser flexible joints in the Gulf of Mexico found damages to the elastomeric seal area near the rotating ball that prompted the replacement of four (4) flexible joints following a failure on a flexible joint that resulted in a small oil spill.

In 2008, a natural gas leak occurred from a steel catenary export riser in the Gulf of Mexico. Through visual inspection by divers, it was determined that the flexible joint on the riser was the source of the leak.   A root cause analysis has not been completed to determine the cause of the failure.

The MMS's statutory role in pipeline safety and pollution prevention requires the agency to monitor dynamic riser performance and failures, and when necessary, take action to prevent this type of incident through regulatory actions and this Safety Alert.

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) strongly urges lessees and operators and pipeline Right-of-way holders that have pipelines with dynamic risers (such as steel catenary risers on offshore floating production facilities) to perform regular maintenance and inspections, monitor the environmental conditions, and maintain records of these activities. A failure on a dynamic riser could pose a potentially significant impact to safety, the environment, and energy supply. It is essential that you perform any necessary actions needed to ensure the safety and reliability of these critical components.

The national consensus standard for dynamic risers, American Petroleum Institute Recommended Practice 2RD, is currently under revision. The revised version will include guidance on integrity management programs for dynamic risers. Upon completion, MMS will consider adopting this standard into its regulations for OCS pipelines.

--MMS--GOMR--
www.gomr.mms.gov