



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

Notice No. 078

October 27, 1978

OCS Operations Safety Alert

Explosion and Fire

A welder was using a cutting torch to cut a hole in the top deck of a production platform. The resulting sparks ignited hydrocarbons which had accumulated on the lower deck. The initial flames caused a drum partially filled with paint solvent to explode, thereby spreading the fire rapidly.

Construction was in progress at the time of the incident, so the production operation had previously been shut in. The welder had resumed cutting the deck plate after his lunch break, but failed to notice that the fire watchers had not returned to their stations. If the fire watchers had been on duty, the initial fire would have been routinely extinguished without mishap. The explosion alerted the work crew, and the fire was extinguished with only minor damage to the production deck.

Corrective actions taken by the operator to prevent a recurrence of this type event were:

1. Remove all drums containing flammables from any area, or underneath any area where welding and cutting will be conducted.
2. Remind welders to check and see that fire watchers are on the job.
3. Foreman will check the work area prior to commencing any cutting or welding operations.

As noted in National Fire Prevention Association Bulletin No. 51 B, cutting and welding operations are a major cause of industrial fires. Molten metal and sparks can scatter as far as 35 feet, setting fire to all kinds of combustible materials. It is important that personnel involved in these operations are aware of all established safety precautions.

[signed] H. G. Frizzell

for D.W. Solanas Oil and Gas Supervisor

Operations Support

Gulf of Mexico Area