



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

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Notice No. 138

May 29, 1985

**Safety Alert**

**Fire and Injury During Welding Operations in Derrick**

A rig mechanic was replacing the control valves for the upper hydraulic drill pipe racking arm in the derrick, and had removed the old braces, using a cutting torch. While he was welding new braces in place, an explosion and fire occurred, which required 19 minutes to extinguish, using seven 30-pound portable dry chemical units. The fire is believed to have been caused by ignition of an accumulation of acetylene gas from a leaking hose. The rig mechanic suffered first- and second-degree burns to his arms and left hand (18 percent of his body).

Investigation has determined that Safe Welding and Burning practices were not followed, since a Welding and Burning permit was not issued; a fire watch was not in the immediate vicinity; a gas detector was not used to determine flammable material; and there was no communication with the company representatives.

To prevent a recurrence of this type accident, the operator has required all drilling contractors to review the Minerals Management Service-approved Safe Welding and Burning Plan with all rig personnel before performing welding, cutting or hot tap operations, and to allow only the designated rig welder to perform the work.

[signed] D.W. Solanas

Regional Supervisor

Rules and Production