



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

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Notice No. 173

August 28, 1997

#### Pig Launcher Explosion Results in Two Fatalities

Two operators aboard a production platform attempted to blow down a 16-inch gas pipeline through the lid of a pig launcher. The process involved opening the pig launcher closure lid and then throttling either a 4-inch kicker or a 16-inch block valve. Since the pig launcher was not fitted with either a pressure relief valve or a pressure gauge and since all launcher valves were closed, it was impossible to determine if the launcher was under pressure prior to opening the closure lid. As the lid was in the process of being opened, a sudden release of pressurized gas (1,020 psi) trapped in the launcher tore the lid from the launcher hinge assembly. The two operators were fatally injured in the accident.

Therefore, from this information, the following are recommended:

1. That all pig launchers/receivers be fitted with a pressure relief valve and a pressure gauge.
2. That pig launcher/receiver lids be used to blow down pipelines only if no other practical method exists. Prior to such an operation, a safety analysis of the operation should be conducted, and resultant procedures should be documented and reviewed.

--MMS--GOMR--

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