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Secretary Zinke Moves Forward to Improve Safety Offshore

HOUSTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced a series of new initiatives to strengthen the federal offshore oil and gas inspection program. Zinke highlighted a risk-based inspection element and an increase in the amount of time allotted for physical inspection of offshore facilities as two of six initiatives that the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) will institute before mid-2018. Zinke’s announcement at the 2018 CERAWEEK conference coincides with the U.S. offshore’s highest oil production year on record, totaling 629 million barrels during 2017.

“One of the pillars to responsible energy development is ensuring it's done safely,” **Secretary Zinke told the CERA attendees.** “As part of the Trump administration’s push for safety in energy development, we are working hard to do our job smarter and ensure industry is exploring and producing safely.”

Starting this month, BSEE inspectors are conducting risk-based inspections as part of the bureau’s overall inspection strategy. This specialized inspection protocol uses analysis of continuous trend data to focus on performance issues of critical equipment or operations.

A second initiative will ensure that the inspector work process is more effective, enabling inspectors to spend more time conducting physical inspections while offshore. This effort will also reduce costs by changing inspector work schedules to match contracted helicopter assets, and decreases safety risks for inspectors by reducing flight time.

Four other initiatives include: increasing BSEE’s engagement with industry, identifying the Best Available and Safest Technology requirements for critical offshore equipment, identifying gaps between advancing technologies and regulations, and researching the potential for third-party certification of BSEE’s inspection program by the International Standards Organization.

BSEE Director Scott Angelle explained, “I want BSEE's programs and processes to be the best in the world, and I’m not afraid to subject them to scrutiny to determine where improvements are needed.”

Since his arrival in 2017, Angelle has called for BSEE to embrace a process of change management. “The six initiatives we are announcing today are an important set of steps that will keep pace with the increased offshore oil gas and production, ensure safety, and protect the environment,” **Angelle stated.** “They will also help BSEE become a more efficient agency, something the American taxpayers expect and deserve.”

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