

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT  
GULF OF MEXICO REGION

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

For Public Release

1. OCCURRED

DATE: 02-MAY-2021 TIME: 1011 HOURS

2. OPERATOR: Cox Operating, L.L.C.

REPRESENTATIVE:  
TELEPHONE:  
CONTRACTOR:  
REPRESENTATIVE:  
TELEPHONE:

- STRUCTURAL DAMAGE
- CRANE
- OTHER LIFTING
- DAMAGED/DISABLED SAFETY SYS.
- INCIDENT >\$25K 2,000,000
- H2S/15MIN./20PPM
- REQUIRED MUSTER
- SHUTDOWN FROM GAS RELEASE
- OTHER

3. OPERATOR/CONTRACTOR REPRESENTATIVE/SUPERVISOR ON SITE AT TIME OF INCIDENT: 8. OPERATION:

4. LEASE: G01361

AREA: ST LATITUDE:  
BLOCK: 26 LONGITUDE:

5. PLATFORM: A  
RIG NAME:

- PRODUCTION
- DRILLING
- WORKOVER
- COMPLETION
- HELICOPTER
- MOTOR VESSEL
- PIPELINE SEGMENT NO.
- OTHER

6. ACTIVITY:  EXPLORATION(POE)  
 DEVELOPMENT/PRODUCTION (DOCD/POD)

9. CAUSE:

7. TYPE:

INJURIES:

- HISTORIC INJURY
  - REQUIRED EVACUATION
  - LTA (1-3 days)
  - LTA (>3 days)
  - RW/JT (1-3 days)
  - RW/JT (>3 days)
  - FATALITY
  - Other Injury
- OPERATOR CONTRACTOR

- EQUIPMENT FAILURE
- HUMAN ERROR
- EXTERNAL DAMAGE
- SLIP/TRIP/FALL
- WEATHER RELATED
- LEAK
- UPSET H2O TREATING
- OVERBOARD DRILLING FLUID
- OTHER

- POLLUTION
- FIRE
- EXPLOSION

- LWC
- HISTORIC BLOWOUT
  - UNDERGROUND
  - SURFACE
  - DEVERTER
  - SURFACE EQUIPMENT FAILURE OR PROCEDURES

COLLISION  HISTORIC  >\$25K  <=\$25K

- 10. WATER DEPTH: 55 FT.
- 11. DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 7 MI.
- 12. WIND DIRECTION:  
SPEED: M.P.H.
- 13. CURRENT DIRECTION:  
SPEED: M.P.H.
- 14. SEA STATE: FT.
- 15. PICTURES TAKEN:
- 16. STATEMENT TAKEN:

During the morning hours of Wednesday, May 2, 2021, a fire incident occurred on a fixed, unmanned, out-of-service, double structure located at South Timbalier Block 26 Platform A and A-Quarters (ST-26 "A"/"A-QTR"), Lease OCS-G 01361. The operator of record is Cox Operating, L.L.C (Cox). During the morning of the incident, there were severe thunderstorms in the vicinity and the Lead Operator on the nearby ST-26 "D" structure observed smoke coming from the ST-26 "A" Facility. The Lead Operator immediately contacted the Field Foreman to dispatch their field motor vessel and others to the scene to assist in putting the fire out. The motor vessels involved in extinguishing the fire were the M/V Kobe Chouest, M/V Loop Responder, M/V Seacor Brave, and the M/V Miss Jessica Faye. No injuries were reported and an investigation was initiated.

Shortly after 10:00 hrs on May 2, 2021, the Lead Operator at the ST-26 "D" facility observed smoke coming from the ST-26 "A" facility. He noted that "conditions were poor, with thunderstorms in the area which made visibility poor". He immediately contacted the Senior Lead Operator at the ST-27 "E" facility. The Senior Lead Operator reported to the Field Foreman that ST-26 "A" was on fire after bad weather passed through the field. The Field Foreman dispatched their field boat M/V Miss Jessica Faye from ST-54 "G" to ST-26 "A" which was one hour away. The Field Foreman in turn called to inform his Superintendent and got another phone call from the Senior Lead who reported that the fire was getting worse. They went to the Vessel Finder website to find the nearby M/V Kobe Chouest and contacted them via marine radio to see if they could assist in putting the fire out. While on the marine radio, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) called the Senior Lead Operator for information about ST-26 "A". As a result, the USCG called all marine boats in the area to come and assist. The M/V Loop Responder went to assist the M/V Kobe Chouest who arrived on the scene and commenced spraying water cannons on the fire on the "A" structure. The Superintendent and Production HSE reported that response flights were initially delayed due to weather, but eventually they, along with Field Foreman, were able to depart for ST-26 "A-QTR" around noon. They reported that upon circling the ST-26 "A"/"A-QTR" Facility, no visible flames could be seen and they noticed a sheen emitting from the facility into offshore waters. They reported that the M/V Loop Responder had water cannons spraying on the Production Deck of ST-26 "A" for several hours. Senior Lead Operator reported that he, an Operator, and Field Electrician traveled by boat to the ST-26 "A"/"A-QTR" Facility via M/V Miss Jessica Faye and waited for the helicopter to land at the ST-26 "A-QTR" facility before boarding the facility around 12:40 hrs. All individuals met at the ST-26 "A-QTR" facility and walked across the bridge to "A" facility to shut off the main breaker in the MCC and diesel generator that powered the Communications Building. At approximately 14:00 hrs, they reportedly walked across the bridge to "A" Facility and saw a small flame coming from the Dry Oil Tank and Communications Building area. They retreated back to safety at the "A-QTR" facility and had the water cannon deluge begin again. At approximately 15:30 hrs, seeing no flames, the group had the water cannons shut down and were able to safely assess the damage more closely. They went to the lower level where they saw the deck boards smoldering from below. Again, they retreated back to "A-QTR" and had the water cannon deluge cut back on for 3-4 more hours. Then, they "rigged-up" a 2" hose from the M/V Miss Jessica Faye to pump water from the boat to extinguish the smoldering deckboards from below the deck. The group continued this effort until departure and had another boat, the M/V Seacor Brave, continue water spray after their departure. Despite continued water deluge throughout the night, deck boards continued to smoke until the next day. The fire was completely extinguished by the next morning, Monday, May 3, 2021.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) Inspectors conducted an onsite incident investigation on May 3, 2021, and collected documentation including pictures and witness statements. Through physical inspection of the site of the incident, review of witness statements, and validation of information, it was

determined that the cause of the fire was lightning striking the Communications Tower and Communications Building. The investigation revealed that the Communications Building was destroyed and fire damage decreased in severity extending away from that point in all directions. Damage to the Communications Tower, including charring and discoloration to the supporting structure in multiple areas were indicative of lightning damage. BSEE verified weather reports and confirmed witness statements reporting severe lightning and thunderstorms. In fact, multiple thunderstorms passed through the area prior to and the morning of the fire incident. It should also be noted that fire damage was most likely intensified by the presence of a hydrocarbon bearing Dry Oil Tank nearby. The scene indicated the Dry Oil Tank was damaged initially by intense heat to the point that process piping separated at the welds in multiple areas as the Dry Oil Tank ballooned, swelling from heat. Due to the height of the piping that was found separated at the welds (closer to the bottom of the tank), the presence of some residual oil on the sides of the tank, in the containment skid, on the top wooden deck and spanning down to the deck below and underneath, and ultimately evidenced by NRC report #1304048, it can be determined that hydrocarbons escaped from the Dry Oil Tank. The release and ignition of these hydrocarbons contributed to the severity of the damage. There is no evidence of an additional possible source of ignition.

18. LIST THE PROBABLE CAUSE(S) OF ACCIDENT:

**Weather related - lightning struck the Communications Tower and Communications Building**

19. LIST THE CONTRIBUTING CAUSE(S) OF ACCIDENT:

**None**

20. LIST THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

**n/a**

21. PROPERTY DAMAGED:

NATURE OF DAMAGE:

**Communications Bldg, Good Oil Tank, LACT Skid, Air Compressors, Dry Oil Pumps, Communications Tower, decking, Compressor, ladder cages, SCADA wiring/device, process piping, drain lines, SDV's, Firefighting/Lifesaving Equipment**

**Fire severely destroyed or damaged most of the equipment in the vicinity of the communications tower**

ESTIMATED AMOUNT (TOTAL):           **\$2,000,000**

22. RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT RECURRANCE NARRATIVE:

**BSEE Houma District has no recommendations for the Office of Incident Investigations at this time.**

23. POSSIBLE OCS VIOLATIONS RELATED TO ACCIDENT:   **NO**

24. SPECIFY VIOLATIONS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CONTRIBUTING. NARRATIVE:

**None**

25. DATE OF ONSITE INVESTIGATION:

28. ACCIDENT CLASSIFICATION:

**04-MAY-2021**

26. INVESTIGATION TEAM MEMBERS:

**Nicholas Bruce / Brandon Dunigan-Author /**

29. ACCIDENT SUPERVISOR

PANEL FORMED: NO  
**Amy Pellegrin**

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27. OPERATOR REPORT ON FILE:

OCS REPORT:

APPROVED

DATE: 18-AUG-2021