

NIOSH and OSHA Directors on Worker Health & Safety

PLOS CURRENTS DISASTERS

Review of the OSHA-NIOSH Response to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Protecting the Health and Safety of Cleanup Workers

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Abstract

Introduction:

The fire and explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig, 72 kilometers offshore southeast of Venice, Louisiana, exploded and caught fire, resulting in the deaths of eleven workers. It soon became clear that the overall response was led by the company BP, federal agencies, and state and local government.

Methods:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention focused extensive resources on ensuring that thousands of workers involved in the response. Federal agencies and state and local government assessed training programs and means of abatement; assessed training programs in languages they could understand; monitored chemical protective equipment was deployed; insisted on impeding thousands of workers; and conducted extensive outreach.

Results:

Advance planning, immediate deployment, and collaborative operations resulted in no worker fatalities, and relative to other major disasters, the response was successful.

Conclusions:

For future responses, improvements should be made in the process behind safety and health decisions, are common to all disasters.

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The Deepwater Horizon Spill

"On the night of April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig, located 72 kilometers offshore southeast of Venice, Louisiana, exploded and caught fire, resulting in the deaths of eleven workers. It soon became clear that the overall response was led by the company BP, federal agencies, and state and local government."

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OSHA worked closely with USCG, BP, and local, state, and federal health agencies to jointly plan and execute response actions and worker safety and health programs.

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