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OSHA

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OSHA Activities During the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

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If you have symptoms or questions, and want to report them to OSHA, contact 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) TTY: 877-889-5627

This page reflects activities during the spring, summer and fall of 2010.

OSHA's Efforts to Protect Workers

Every day OSHA had over 146 professionals protecting workers throughout the Gulf. From April 26th through October 1st in 2010, anywhere from 20-40 were assigned solely to the Oil Spill Response. OSHA personnel deployed to all staging areas in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. OSHA staff was on the ground and on boats to make sure BP was protecting cleanup workers from health and safety hazards.

OSHA worked as part of the coordinated federal response which included the U.S. Coast Guard and other government agencies that deal with health and the environment to evaluate BP's efforts and make sure BP put in place all of the precautions needed to protect workers from the hazards associated with cleanup work. When OSHA found problems or learned about them from workers, we immediately brought them to the attention of BP and monitored the situation until they were corrected. OSHA also raised its concerns throughout the Unified Command so they could be addressed across the entire response area. See [OSHA's Activity Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

Exposure to Toxic Chemicals. To determine whether or not workers were exposed to dangerous levels of toxic chemicals, OSHA conducted its own independent air monitoring, both on shore and on the cleanup vessels, and reviewed data from BP, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). No air sampling by OSHA detected any hazardous chemical at levels of concern. See [more information on OSHA's sampling strategy](#), detailed findings, and evaluations. Read our [frequently asked questions on health hazards and protections](#), including information on respirators and other personal protective equipment.

Training is important. To work in cleanup, you must be trained on the hazards of your job in a language that you understand. You must be trained before you begin oil spill response and cleanup work. [Read OSHA's fact sheet on training requirements for the DeepWater Horizon oil spill response.](#)

Worker Protection. To help workers understand their risks and what their employers should be doing to protect them, OSHA developed a series of job-specific sheets. Each sheet provides information on the hazards associated with the task and required training and PPE. Read the [Worker Protection Information](#) page for Job-Specific Safety and Health Sheets, [BP PPE Matrix](#) [35 KB PDF*, 2 pages], and other valuable worker protection information. Employers must provide workers with all required protective equipment (for example: protective gloves, boots and coveralls) **free of cost.** [Additional publications on work hazards.](#)

Heat Stress. One of the most serious health hazards facing cleanup workers is heat stress. The risk from the heat and humidity is exacerbated by the long days worked and the protective equipment required, e.g. chemical resistant Tyvek coveralls, boots and gloves. More than a thousand workers were treated for heat-related illness, and some cases were very serious. At

OSHA Response By the Numbers

	4/26 thru 10/1/10
Site visits by OSHA personnel*	4,266
Exposure Assessments	7,439
OSHA personnel:	
Permanently assigned to Gulf	146

*Site Visits cover vessels of opportunity, Staging areas, decontamination, distribution, and deployment sites

OSHA Presence and Chemical Sampling in the Gulf



[Open interactive map](#)

Additional Info

- [Scene Coordinator Report Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill](#) [11 MB PDF, 244 pages]
- [Hurricanes and Oil Spill \(NOAA\)](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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- Joint NIOSH/OSHA Interim Guidance
- Dr. Michaels Congressional Testimony, Worker Health & Safety in the Gulf
- OSHA MOU with USCG On Scene Coordinator

OSHA's urging, BP implemented at all work sites a heat stress management plan that included a matrix setting out specific work/rest requirements based on the heat, relative humidity, and the protective equipment worn by all workers. See more information on [heat stress](#) and [other hazards](#).

Injuries & Illness. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducted a number of studies of worker exposures and work related injuries and illnesses among oil spill response workers. NIOSH launched a wide-ranging Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) of the work associated with the response and cleanup. It published six HHE reports that cover a variety of oil spill operations. The latest report discussed two investigations: one involving a health symptom survey of offshore response workers and one investigation involving an analysis of response workers hospitalizations. In the first investigation, NIOSH surveyed offshore workers and asked them about their symptoms and their exposures to oil and dispersants while working offshore. Analysis showed increased reports of upper respiratory irritation and cough associated with oil and dispersant exposure but did not account for other factors like exposure to road and gravel dust at the marina docks. The second investigation provided more information about the investigation of the seven fishermen who were hospitalized in May and reported in HHE interim report 1. It also contained information about ten additional hospitalizations not reported in HEE interim report 1. Heat illness was likely responsible for five of those hospitalized workers' conditions and information regarding the effects of oil and dispersant exposure was inconclusive. Read the full report on [health symptoms of offshore response workers](#) [1 MB PDF, 16 pages] and [worker hospitalizations](#) [1 MB PDF, 16 pages]. NIOSH's other reports evaluate worker exposures during operations including [vessels of opportunity operations](#), [2 MB PDF, 59 pages] [drilling operations](#) [2 MB PDF, 59 pages], [in-situ burning](#) [2 MB PDF, 34 pages], [barge oil vacuuming](#) [2 MB PDF, 34 pages], oil dispersant application (Corexit EC9500A, evaluated in Interim Reports [1](#) [2 MB PDF, 24 pages] and [3](#) [2 MB PDF, 39 pages]), [skimming](#) [2 MB PDF, 39 pages], and [wildlife cleaning and rehabilitation](#) [1 MB PDF, 12 pages] and follow the [hospitalization of seven fishermen](#) [2 MB PDF, 24 pages] on May 22nd. One of the reports also summarized findings from the review of the [injury and illness logs](#) [2 MB PDF, 34 pages] from an infirmary in Venice, LA. Read the [full reports](#) on NIOSH's Deepwater Horizon Health Hazard Evaluation activities. NIOSH also analyzed BP's response-wide worker injury and illness logs. Through July 27th 2010, 86% of cases required first aid only. They found that heat stress and heat effects were the most prevalent illness. In addition to illnesses from heat stress, the logs included 171 instances with multiple symptoms, many of which were consistent with heat stress. The most common injuries onshore and offshore were cuts and bruises, as well as insect bites/stings for onshore workers and sprains for those working offshore. See [the full NIOSH Injury & Illness Report](#) or the [BP Deepwater Horizon Recordable Injury and Illness Data](#).

Accessibility Assistance: Contact the OSHA Directorate of Technical Support and Emergency Management at (202) 693-2300 for assistance accessing PDF materials.

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