

Safety Alert

MMS

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

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Two Injured in Separate Incidents from Lack of Fall Protection and Improper Supervision

In two recent separate incidents, persons were injured while participating in offshore operations.

Incident No. 1 – After a temporary well-test flare boom was welded to the rig, the crane cables supporting it were slacked off 5 ft. A service company employee walked to the end of the boom to test the welds by jumping up and down, but did not wear fall protection gear. Forgoing fall protection in such situations is a frequent practice because of fear that, if the welds failed, the boom would become an anchor. As the employee jumped on the end of the boom, the welds failed, and the boom dropped until arrested by the crane cables. The employee was thrown off the boom, falling 95 ft into the Gulf of Mexico.

Incident No. 2 – Skirting was being removed from the heli-deck of a platform to allow access to the well bay. When the crane lifted a section of skirting, a hole in the deck was created. A contractor employee was positioned next to the skirting lift location. As the skirting was raised, the employee stepped back and fell 23 ft through the newly created opening, striking the wellhead before landing on the grating deck below.

The MMS concluded the following:

- **Lack of proper supervision contributed to both incidents.** No procedure was developed for Incident No. 2 nor was a JSA meeting held. In both incidents, employees were improperly positioned during operations, resulting in unnecessary personal risk.
- **Failure to wear fall protection gear contributed to both incidents.** In Incident No. 1, the employee did not wear fall protection because of the perceived lack of a secure connection point. In Incident No. 2, the employee did not wear fall protection because it was not anticipated that operations would create the need for it.

The MMS recommends the following:

- Operators ensure that experienced and accountable supervision is supplied by all contractor crews and that proper procedures, including positioning of personnel during critical operations, are reviewed in a JSA meeting prior to conducting operations.
- Operators ensure that all personnel wear fall protection when necessary and that a secure connection for the fall protection be provided and used.