

IADC Briefing Book

Environment – Spills



Oil and gas spills, and the resulting environmental contamination, are the most visible incidents to the general public, which leads to an overall negative perception about the industry. These include both larger scale offshore incidents, such as Macondo, as well as onshore incidents. However, the implementation of prevention-oriented regulations along with voluntary industry initiatives, have combined to reduce the incidence of spills dramatically. Billions of barrels of oil and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas are produced successfully each year with minimal spills. [1]

Key Messages

- IADC members work hard to prevent spills. Facilities are specifically designed to minimize spills and for safe operations, and are inspected and maintained on an ongoing schedule. Spill response emergency systems and personnel plans to prepare and practice emergency response to incidents are also in place, along with spill prevention, control and countermeasure plans. Each of these is done in an effort to mitigate the consequences of spills to the people working on the rig, and the environment.
- New technologies currently being used are intended to prevent unwanted releases, or spills. An emphasis on blowout preventers, or BOPs, and appropriate training on employing them in case of emergency, is a strong focus of all drilling contractors.
- Drilling contractors are committed to reducing human error by providing appropriate training to all workplace personnel and have recognized the importance of empowering their personnel to speak up when they see a hazardous situation.
- Following Macondo, industry took steps to improve safety and reduce spills. One of those was to build and deploy rapid-response containment systems, which are pre-engineered, constructed, tested and ready for rapid deployment in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico to contain spilled oil with no flow to the sea. [2]
- The oil and gas industry consistently demonstrates a strong safety record while providing the energy the US demands. Domestic production of oil and natural gas is critical to the economy, providing American jobs and billions of dollars in revenue.
- Publicly available spill data available from API, shows that significant progress has been made toward reducing spills since the early 1970's. According to the latest report, in 2009, 77% less oil is spilling since the 70's and 46% less than the previous decade. [1]

Resources

1. API Oil Spill Prevention and Response report: <http://www.api.org/oil-and-natural-gas/environment/clean-water/oil-spill-prevention-and-response/%7E/media/93371EDFB94C4B4D9C6BBC766F0C4A40.ashx>
2. Energy Tomorrow: <http://www.energytomorrow.org/environment-and-safety/oil-spill-prevention-and-response>