



BP's Deepwater Oil Spill - (Breaking) Anonymous Official Expresses Concern about Seeps and Pressure (and Open Thread)

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on July 18, 2010 - 9:58am

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [deepwater horizon](#), [oil spill](#) [[list all tags](#)]

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Update: 9:00PM EDT Sunday: Admiral Allen has sent a [letter](#) to BP about seeps which have been detected "a distance from the well", and indicates that BP needs to develop a plan for opening the choke valve as quickly as possible without damaging the well, in the event that hydrocarbon seepage near the well head is confirmed. This is what the letter says:

Dear Mr. Dudley,

My letter to you on July 16, 2010 extended the Well Integrity Test period contingent upon the completion of seismic surveys, robust monitoring for indications of leakage, and acoustic testing by the NOAA vessel PISCES in the immediate vicinity of the well head. Given the current observations from the test, including the detected seep a distance from the well and undetermined anomalies at the well head, monitoring of the seabed is of paramount importance during the test period. As a continued condition of the test, you are required to provide as a top priority access and coordination for the monitoring systems, which include seismic and sonar surface ships and subsea ROV and acoustic systems. When seeps are detected, you are directed to marshal resources, quickly investigate, and report findings to the government in no more than four hours. I direct you to provide me a written procedure for opening the choke valve as quickly as possible without damaging the well should hydrocarbon seepage near the well head be confirmed.

As the National Incident Commander, I must remain abreast of the status of your source control efforts. Now that source control has evolved into a period beyond the expected 48 hour interval of the Well Integrity Test, I am requiring that you provide me a written update within 24 hours of your intentions going forward. I remain concerned that all potential options to eliminate the discharge of oil be pursued with utmost speed until I can be assured that no additional oil will spill from the Macondo Well.

You may use your letter of 9 July as a basis for your update. Specifically, you must provide me your latest containment plan and schedule in the event that the Well Integrity Test is suspended, the status and completion timelines for all containment options currently under development, and details of any other viable source control options including hydraulic control that you are considering. You should highlight any points at which progress along one option will be impacted by resource trade-offs to achieve progress along another option. Include options for and impacts of continued twice-a day seismic testing versus once a day testing.

As you develop the plans above, note that the primary method of securing the source is the relief well and this effort takes precedence. Therefore, I direct you to provide a detailed plan for the final stages of the relief well that specifically addresses the interaction of this schedule and any other activity that may potentially delay relief well completion.

Have your representative provide results on the monitoring efforts and source control requirements described above during today's BP and Government Science Team call at 8:00 PM CDT.

Sincerely,

THAD W. ALLEN

Previous Update *AP has released this story ([link here](#)), entitled "(Anonymous) Official: Seep found near BP's blown out oil well."*

The last open thread where this was being discussed (all throughout, but especially towards the bottom) was <http://www.theoil Drum.com/node/6745>.

Doug Suttles was the BP representative on this morning's (Sunday morning) [technical update](#). Mr. Suttles said that pressure is now at 6,778 psi, and continues to build at one to two psi per hour, and this is encouraging. BP still does not see any problems.

BP now thinks that there is a possibility that the test can continue from now until the well is killed by the relief well, probably in August. But this is not a decision that can be made all at once. Instead, careful monitoring will be continued, and a decision made on a day by day basis. Admiral Allen and government representatives will no doubt be involved in decision making as well.

Mr. Suttles said that when the cap is left on, this is really continued testing, rather than shutting the well in.

BP is using a number of types of tests to make sure that no hydrocarbons are escaping from the well bore. The types of tests being used include

- Seismic
- Sonar
- Monitoring by NOAA Pisces
- ROV's looking for visual and sonar evidence
- Monitoring temperature at the BOP

Regarding monitoring temperature at the blowout preventer (BOP), they would expect to see the temperature to rise, if any hydrocarbons were escaping. The temperature is at a steady 40 degrees, so this is not showing evidence of any escape.

Yesterday, Kent Wells mentioned that some bubbles had been seen. BP has not yet been able to gather samples of these bubbles, but is working on this effort. If these bubbles were methane, they would expect to see methane hydrates forming, but none have been seen so far. So this would seem to be evidence that the bubbles that have been seen are something else.

Mr. Suttles indicated that really would like to keep the cap on if conditions permit. If it is necessary to take the cap off, oil can be expected to flow into the gulf for up to three days.

Relief Well 1 is now at 17,864 feet. The next step is casing the well, and that will take about a week. After that, they can start drilling--very slowly--the remaining distance. The well intercept is expected to take place about the end of July, but the kill procedure will take until perhaps mid-August.



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