n response to the Deepwater Horizon explosion and resulting oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Obama Administration launched the most aggressive and comprehensive reforms to offshore oil and gas regulation and oversight in U.S. history. The reforms, which strengthen requirements for everything from well design and workplace safety to corporate accountability, are helping ensure that the U.S. can safely and responsibly expand development of its energy resources.

In selecting Michael R. Bromwich to lead the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) in June 2010, President Barack Obama and Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretary Ken Salazar issued a mandate to reform the government’s regulation of offshore energy development and the agency responsible for it.

Under the leadership of Secretary Salazar and Director Bromwich, DOI and BOEMRE are making changes in an attempt to restore the American people’s confidence in the safety and environmental protection of oil and gas drilling and production on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, ensuring that responsible oil and gas development continues.

**Enhanced Drilling Safety**

- Operators must demonstrate that they are prepared to deal with the potential for a blowout and worst-case discharge per NTL-06.
- Permit applications for drilling projects must meet new standards for well-design, casing and cementing and be independently certified by a professional engineer per the new Drilling Safety Rule. Drilling standards in the exploration and development stages, for equipment, safety practices, environmental safeguards and oversight, will be strengthened.
- New guidance, through NTL-10, requires a corporate compliance statement and review of subsea blowout containment resources for deepwater drilling, a key lesson of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

**Enhanced Drilling Safety**

BOEMRE has imposed, for the first time, requirements that offshore operators maintain comprehensive safety and environmental programs. This includes performance-based standards for offshore drilling and production operations, including equipment, safety practices, environmental safeguards, and management oversight of operations and contractors. Companies
will now need to develop and maintain a Safety and Environmental Management System per the new Workplace Safety Rule.

**Enhanced Workplace Safety**  
**Ongoing Improvements to the Offshore Regulator**

The reorganization and internal reforms that BOEMRE is implementing are designed to remove the complex and sometimes conflicting missions of the former Minerals Management Service (MMS) by clarifying and separating these missions across three agencies and by providing each of the new agencies with clear areas of focus and new resources necessary to fulfill those missions:

- In the place of the former MMS, it is creating three strong, independent agencies with clearly defined roles and missions through a comprehensive **reorganization**.
- In his first week, Director Bromwich established an **Investigations and Review Unit** to root out problems within the regulatory agency and to target companies that aim to game the system.
- The bureau has implemented a new **recusal policy** for BOEMRE employees to deal with real and perceived conflicts of interest.
- Secretary Salazar and Director Bromwich launched a full review of the use of **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**, categorical exclusions, during which they are not used to approve proposed deepwater drilling projects.

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resulting oil spill and to make recommendations for safe operations of future oil and gas activities on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. JIT held seven sessions of public hearings, received testimony from more than 80 witnesses and experts and reviewed a large number of documents and exhibits pertaining to all aspects of the investigation.

Volume I, released April 22, 2011, includes findings on five aspects of the disaster under Coast Guard jurisdiction, including the explosions on the mobile offshore drilling unit (MODU) Deepwater Horizon; the resulting fire; evacuations; the flooding and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon; and the safety systems of the MODU and its owner, Transocean. The Coast Guard’s final action memo details actions directed by Admiral Papp, as a result of JIT’s work, reflecting the Coast Guard’s commitment to all of those affected by this event and underscoring its commitment to the stewardship of the maritime environment.

Volume II includes findings on the causes, both direct and contributing, of the Macondo blowout and the resulting explosion and fire aboard the Deepwater Horizon. In Volume II, JIT details evidence developed during the investigation and concludes that BP, Transocean and Halliburton’s conduct in connection with the Deepwater Horizon disaster violated many federal offshore safety regulations under BOEMRE’s jurisdiction.

Volume II also includes recommendations for the continued improvement of the safety of offshore operations.

In the wake of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy, BOEMRE launched the most aggressive and comprehensive reforms to offshore oil and gas regulation and oversight in U.S. history. The reforms strengthen requirements for everything from well design and workplace safety to corporate accountability. An additional rule, which will be made available for public comment, will incorporate additional safety requirements related to the findings of the investigation.

**LINKS**

- Admiral Papp/Director Bromwich Cover Memo
- Volume I
- Volume II
- Appendices