DIRTY DRILLING

Trump Administration Proposals Weaken Key Safety Protections and Radically Expand Offshore Drilling

SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS IN OFFSHORE OIL OPERATIONS

Weak Oversight

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) is tasked with ensuring safety and environmental protection in offshore drilling, but the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found BSEE’s enforcement capabilities inadequate.

AS OF 2018
BSEE EMPLOYED

ROUGHLY
120
INSPECTORS

TO CONDUCT
MORE THAN
20,000
INSPECTIONS ANNUALLY
Operating costs for offshore drilling can be $1 million per day, but penalties for violating offshore operating requirements are capped at only $44,675 per day per violation.

BSEE Relies Heavily On Industry-Written Safety Standards

INDUSTRY writes its own safety standards

OFFSHORE OPERATORS must adhere to BSEE regulations

BSEE incorporates industry-written standards into regulations

BSEE regulates offshore oil and gas operators

BSEE grants exemptions to these regulations

$1,000,000 Operating Cost/Day

$44,675 Penalties/Day/Violation

Grossly inadequate civil penalties fail to deter corner-cutting

INDUSTRY PROFITS ARE IN THE BILLIONS PER YEAR.
Far too many spills continue in U.S. waters every year

6,500
At least 6,500 oil spills occurred in U.S. waters between 2007 and 2017.

Oil spill clean-up methods are limited and largely unchanged since the late 1980s

60 MILLION
After "clean-up" following the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster, up to an estimated 60 million gallons of oil remained in the environment - that is five times more than the total amount initially spilled by the Exxon Valdez.

Financially at-risk companies place an enormous financial burden on the public

After production concludes, companies must address oil and gas infrastructure, including its removal from the environment.

$33 BILLION
Some smaller companies do not have the resources available to decommission their facilities, leaving American taxpayers to face the burden for those costs when wells must be capped. As of 2015, those liabilities were approximately $33 billion in the Gulf of Mexico.

Financially at-risk companies operate roughly 449 of the 2,104 active facilities in the Gulf.

SPILLS ARE TYPICALLY FAR LARGER THAN REPORTED.

4X
One study determined oil spill size estimates are on average over four times larger than what is reported to the Coast Guard.

Clean-up costs alone amounted to over $14 billion in the years directly following the BP Deepwater Horizon spill.

$14 BILLION
A Coast Guard Admiral who responded to the Deepwater Horizon spill, stated that seas over four feet rendered the Coast Guard’s ability to remove the oil “virtually impossible.”

ONGOING OIL SPILLS CONTINUE TO POLLUTE OUR OCEANS
At the time of the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion that killed 11 rig workers, the U.S. offshore oil industry had the highest reported rate of fatalities among its international peers. Industry's fatality rate was four times higher than in European waters between 2004 and 2009.

In the United States, the oil and gas industry's fatality rate (both onshore and offshore) was an average of seven times higher than among other U.S. workers in general between 2003 and 2013.

According to the most recently published BSEE data since the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster, offshore operators reported 1,568 injuries between 2011 and 2017.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- President Trump should direct his administration to halt all efforts to expand offshore drilling activities to new areas and abandon attempts to weaken safety regulations.

- BSEE should seek transformative changes to industry's safety culture through greater inspections and enforcement, and by reducing reliance on industry-written standards.

- Congress must substantially increase financial penalties for safety violations to deter dangerous, non-compliant behavior and ensure that risk-taking is no longer profitable.

- Congress must require accurate oil spill reporting, establish industry-specific penalties for under-reporting, increase federal resources and research new clean-up technologies.

For Oceana's full report, please visit oceana.org/DirtyDrilling