

Bet You Didn't Know

2006: A Record Year for MMS Technological Approvals

New technologies used in deep water oil and natural gas exploration and production must first be approved by Minerals Management Service (MMS) to ensure safety of the equipment, the people operating it, and the environment in which it is operated. During 2006 more technological advances than ever before were evaluated by MMS and 30 were approved, a record number.

Many of the 30 technology approvals granted by Minerals Management Service in FY 2006 resulted from industry's move to explore deeper waters for oil and natural gas reserves.

- New technologies must receive approval from MMS before being incorporated into an oil or natural gas company's operational and production planning.
- New technologies are reviewed by MMS petroleum and structural engineers.
- New technologies are only approved after undergoing a thorough hazard analysis, where engineers consider different conditions and safety precautions and confirm proven methods of emergency shutdown operations.
- New technologies receiving approvals may actually represent years of review and testing by experienced professionals representing MMS, along with private and public experts in the field.
- When evaluating new technologies prior to their use, MMS has two overriding goals:
 - Increase the safety of the people doing the work; and,
 - Protect the environment.
- MMS spent \$1.8 million funding research in offshore technology in FY 2006, ranging from improved design standards to studying the effectiveness of testing methodologies.
- Every year, MMS engineers collaborate with universities, research and development industries, and government laboratories in the conception and design of new technologies tailored to the deep-water environment.
- The rigorous testing, design, and evaluation process was validated in the wakes of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. All offshore personnel were evacuated safely and as planned.
- Also of significance, all emergency shut-off valves worked as designed – which means oil flow was shut in before the hurricanes arrived, resulting in no major

spills in the Gulf of Mexico, even in the aftermath of the most devastating hurricane season on record.

- Some of the new advances from 2006 include:
 - A new high-pressure protection system for pipelines;
 - The use of pre-set polyester moorings for deep water drilling rigs;
 - Enhanced oil recovery systems using sub-sea pumps; and,
 - New floating production, storage, and off-loading facilities.

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