



# Coast Guard Fact Sheet

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## Deepwater Horizon Marine Board of Investigation

On April 27, under authority provided by the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act and in accordance with a pre-existing Memorandum of Agreement, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of the Interior directed the U.S. Coast Guard and the Minerals Management Service to conduct a joint investigation into the Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit Deepwater Horizon incident that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010. The incident resulted in the loss of 11 lives, the burning and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon, and the ongoing discharge of oil into the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

The Coast Guard has classified its investigative efforts as a Marine Board of Investigation, the highest level of investigative effort following a maritime casualty. These investigations are intended to determine the cause of the casualty to the fullest extent possible, promote safety of life and property at sea, and obtain information for the purpose of preventing or reducing the effects of similar casualties in the future. If the investigation reveals criminal misconduct on the part of any involved parties, then the Coast Guard will determine if the matter should be referred to the Department of Justice for criminal prosecution.

The board has the power to administer oaths, summon witnesses, require persons having knowledge of the subject matter to answer questionnaires, and require relevant documents and any other evidence to be submitted. Furthermore, through its incorporation of public proceedings, the Marine Board of Investigation provides transparency of its processes to best serve the public's interest.

The joint investigation will have the powers of both agencies and will be co-chaired and staffed by highly experienced and skilled representatives of both agencies. Upon completion of the joint investigation, the team will simultaneously issue a single report to the Director of the Minerals Management Service and the Commandant of the Coast Guard containing the evidence brought forward, facts established and its conclusions and recommendations. The Commandant of the Coast Guard and the Director of the Minerals Management Service will jointly sign and release the final report. The team has been given nine months, from the date of the convening order (April 27, 2010), to submit the final report.

The initial proceeding, held May 11-12, 2010, established the foundation for the investigation, including:

- The search and rescue aspects of the casualty
- Accounts/actions of the vessel involved in rendering assistance to the evacuated crew
- All aspects of the safety net (Coast Guard, Minerals Management Service, and Republic of the Marshall Islands' Flag Administration<sup>1</sup>)

It is expected that there will be two or three more public proceedings of the joint investigation. The dates for these meetings will depend on the availability of witnesses, and any on-scene investigation which is being conducted to support the investigation. Subsequent proceedings will examine the corporate safety culture of the Deepwater Horizon owner and operator, leaseholders as well as the recovery, examination, analysis and evaluation of the critical drilling and blow out preventer equipment. At this time, the second public proceeding is scheduled to take place on May 25-29, 2010 in New Orleans, La.

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<sup>1</sup> Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit Deepwater Horizon was flagged in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.