

Summary: Negligent Supervisors Who Triggered Fatal Explosion in Gulf of Mexico Sentenced To Probation and Fines

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The OIG investigated allegations that workers aboard an offshore oil production platform violated Federal regulations, which resulted in an explosion that killed three platform workers and spilled oil into the Gulf of Mexico in November 2012.

We found that three individuals and three companies—Black Elk Energy Offshore Operations, LLC (Black Elk), Wood Group PSN, Inc.; and Grand Isle Shipyards, Inc.—were negligent in their responsibility to safely conduct welding operations aboard the offshore oil production platform. We also found the parties involved did not comply with welding regulations issued by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), which contributed to the fatal explosion.

The United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana prosecuted this matter, and all six parties pleaded guilty and were convicted of violations of the Clean Water Act. Black Elk also pleaded guilty to violations of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. The criminal sentences for all six parties resulted in the combined total of 168 months of probation and \$6,505,000 in criminal fines.

This is a summary of an investigative report that we issued to the BSEE Director.

