



GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE.com

HOME SUBSCRIBE E-NEWSLETTERS MULTIMEDIA EVENTS COLUMNS CALENDAR JOBS ABOUT US

THE WORKFORCE DEFENSE+HOMELAND SECURITY TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT+OVERSIGHT THE MAGAZINE SEARCH | Advanced Search

TOPICS

- NEWS HEADLINES
- PAY AND BENEFITS
- RETIREMENT
- TELEWORK
- PER DIEMS AND TRAVEL
- NSPS
- ENERGY
- GREEN GOVERNMENT
- FISCAL 2010 BUDGET
- THE BASICS
- THE MAILBAG
- GOVEXEC ON TWITTER

Interior seeks more resources to oversee offshore oil and gas activities

By Katherine McIntire Peters | kpeters@govexec.com | September 8, 2010

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar on Wednesday said the department would seek an additional \$100 million in budget authority in 2011 to bolster its ability to police oil and gas industry operations offshore.

"We are remaking a regulatory agency from the ground up," Salazar said in describing the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement. BOEMRE was created to replace the now defunct Minerals Management Service following the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20. The accident and subsequent spill killed 11 and released 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf.

Salazar said the bureau is crafting its request for more resources in response to a [report](#) issued Wednesday by the Outer Continental Shelf Safety Oversight Board. Salazar created the board following the spill to recommend ways to strengthen the permitting process, inspections, regulatory enforcement and environmental stewardship.

BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich also released the bureau's [plan](#) for implementing reforms the board recommended.

"We know there is no magic wand that will make the shadow of the past disappear, or that will magically usher in a new era for this agency," Bromwich wrote in a memorandum to Salazar released with the plan. Bromwich said various ongoing reviews of the failings of MMS prior to the April rig explosion threaten to overshadow the reforms BOEMRE is undertaking.

"It is critically important that as our reform efforts continue, the department and the outside world acknowledge those efforts and recognize the enormous transformation the agency is undergoing," he said.

In a teleconference with reporters and senior officials, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Wilma Lewis said the board's recommendations should be considered a blueprint for ongoing reforms.

"Our goal is a culture of safety where protecting human life and preventing environmental disasters are the highest priorities, while making leasing and production safer," Lewis said.

Shortages of qualified engineers, inspectors and investigators present a major challenge for the bureau, Bromwich and others said. Offshore oil and gas development has increased 200 percent since the early 1980s, while the number of federal oversight personnel has decreased nearly 40 percent, the report noted.

The imbalance between government and industry resources has put enormous pressure on inspectors and other staff. While the oil and gas

- E-MAIL THIS ARTICLE
- PRINTER-FRIENDLY VERSION
- COMMENT ON THIS STORY

RELATED STORIES

- Interior tightens drilling oversight** 08/17/10
- GOP lawmakers skewer Interior chief on drilling oversight** 07/23/10
- Interior submits MMS reorganization plan to Congress** 07/15/10
- Interior imposes new drilling moratorium** 07/13/10
- Salazar to seek funding for drilling inspectors** 06/24/10

TODAY'S MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED READ

1. Defense insourcing to continue at military services
2. Poll: Feds earn too much dough
3. ACLU sues to block searches of electronic devices
4. Burning Question: Do young managers discriminate against older workers?
5. Federal fundraising drive aims to build on last year's success



industry works around-the-clock, BOEMRE district offices in the Gulf of Mexico task a single engineer with handling industry requests after business hours, and those engineers are handicapped because they cannot access government databases outside their offices for security reasons. In addition, a lack of standardization among districts leads energy operators to sometimes "shop around" for regulatory approval, the report said.

The report found that 90 percent of inspectors surveyed said more unannounced inspections of industry operations were required, yet they were rarely performed. In some cases, Coast Guard security restrictions inhibit surprise inspections. In other cases, the board found documentation indicating "special notification arrangements" between BOEMRE and certain companies.

In total, the board made 59 recommendations for improving oversight.

"I embrace the recommendations and we'll move forward with every ounce of energy we have to implement them," Salazar said.

COMMENTS

[VIEW ALL COMMENTS](#) | [POST COMMENT](#)

And lets watch the fracting going on within our borders, as well!
Tom | Posted September 9, 2010 | 8:25 AM

Yep, let's throw some money at it! And while were at it, we'll make some new laws for the Interior to do the job. However washington WON'T provide enough funding for the Interior to effectively monitor the new program. End result: more contamination in the gulf and "big government" is to blame and takes a hit for being ineffective. sign me: "Set up for failure'again"
Ol' Fed | Posted September 9, 2010 | 7:22 AM

[VIEW ALL COMMENTS](#)

SPONSORED LINKS

Analysis of NASA Vendors

Complimentary Report of Past NASA Vendors' Work Quality, Timeliness, and Cost
www.INPUT.com

\$112B in Govt IT Opportunities by 2015

Maximize Your Market Position: FREE Summary of Federal IT Forecast 2010-2015
www.INPUT.com

Obama's Acquisition Reform- Free Summary

Learn What Obama Administration Initiatives Will Mean for Contractors & Vendors
www.INPUT.com

Disk Performance Analyzer For Networks.

FREE DOWNLOAD! Spot System Bottlenecks Before They Become Network Problems.
www.diskeeper.com

For Government Contracts: Insist on Genuine Security Products

Westcon Group GSA Schedule Contract Holder: Safe, Secure, Streamlined
gsa.westcon.com

Download a FREE copy--Acquisition Reform: It s More Than the Contract

A holistic approach to improving acquisition, project and mission outcomes.
www.esi-intl.com

See how Adobe helps agencies become more open and transparent

View case studies and download the Adobe government whitepaper at Adobe.com/OpenGov
ad.doubleclick.net

Attend Amazon Web Services Cloud for the Federal Government Event

Join Amazon.com CTO Dr. Werner Vogels and our federal government customers on Sept 23
aws.amazon.com

[VIEW MORE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES...](#)

[BUY A LINK NOW...](#)

Advancing the business of government through analysis, insight and the sharing of best practices.

SPONSORED RESEARCH

Cybersecurity Habits in Federal Agencies: An Assessment of User Responsibility

DELL, CITRIX, MICROSOFT and INTEL

Is Cybersecurity Slowing Federal Executives Down? CITRIX in partnership with INTEL

From the Bottom Up: Advice for the Chiefs SYMANTEC and CA

COOP Planning at Your Agency: Keep Systems Running During Disaster CDW-G and EMC

Advancing IT Innovation in Federal Agencies DLT and REDHAT



[Print Subscriptions](#) [Editorial Calendar](#) [Media Kit](#) [Reprints](#) [FAQ](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [News Feeds](#)

(C) 2010 BY NATIONAL JOURNAL GROUP, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.