



Offshore industry prepares for peak hurricane season

For many of us, the month of August ushers in the promise of a new school year, anticipation for the upcoming football season and hope for an early fall. August also heralds the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season, with mid-August to mid-September historically experiencing the most active storm development, and a renewed call for all of us along the Gulf Coast to be vigilant and prepared.

Within our own homes and families, storm preparation includes making an evacuation plan, boarding our windows, having a radio to monitor weather alerts, and stocking up essentials like canned goods, bottled water, flashlights and batteries. Miles offshore, oil and gas operators are also vigilant during this height of hurricane season, ready to implement their comprehensive hurricane preparation and response plans if and when a storm threatens to enter the Gulf.

For the Gulf oil and gas industry, developing storm preparation and response plans is not a quick task done at the start of hurricane season. For indus-

try, this is a year-round process focused on ensuring the safety of the thousands of men and women who work offshore, protecting the marine environment and securing critical American energy infrastructure.

According to Petrodata, there were 79 rigs, jack-ups, semi-submersibles and drill ships in the Gulf of Mexico as of June 1, representing millions of barrels of domestic oil production, thousands of American jobs and millions of dollars in capital investments. Just one hurricane in the Gulf puts it all at risk. That's why the offshore industry follows strict standards to ensure the safety of workers on drilling rigs and platforms, limit storm impacts and reduce the time it takes to resume normal operations.

Days before a tropical storm or hurricane is predicted to travel near drilling or production facilities in the Gulf, operators begin to shut down operations, secure those facilities and evacuate personnel in stages by boat and helicopter. Rigs that can be moved are relocated out of the storm's path, and drill ships may be moved to a safe location as well. Producing wells are

"shut in" by safety valves located below the ocean floor to prevent pollution if the hurricane damages the producing rig.

After the preparation comes the response. Once a storm has passed, operators may coordinate flights over offshore facilities to determine if there is any visible damage from the air. Once any safety concerns are addressed, assessment teams are sent to conduct extensive on-site inspections and evaluate any damages. If there are no damages and the offshore facility is deemed safe, employees will begin to return to the offshore drilling and production facilities to restart operations. This entire process could last a few days or a few weeks, depending on the severity of the storm and its impacts, much like the evacuation of our own homes or communities.

According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), the Gulf Coast region accounts for over 50 percent of U.S. refining capacity, and federal waters in the Gulf account for 18 percent of oil and 5 percent of natural gas production. In addition, EIA estimates that half of the gasoline consumed on the East Coast and a quarter of the crude

oil refined in the Midwest originates from the Gulf Coast region.

Clearly, a hurricane or tropical storm making landfall here can disrupt our entire nation's energy supply at a time when there might also be a surge in demand, which could lead to short-term price increases for consumers throughout our country. That's why industry seeks to resume normal operations as safely and as quickly as possible after a storm. Consumers like you and me can also help by conserving energy in our homes and businesses and maintaining regular buying habits for fuel in our cars and trucks before, during and after a storm.

Our offshore oil and gas industry is prepared to protect its workers, the environment and critical energy facilities should any hurricane or tropical storm threaten the Gulf Coast this year and in the future. Here at LMOGA, we also urge you have a plan in place to keep your family safe as the peak of hurricane season approaches.

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