

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE
GULF OF MEXICO OCS REGION**

NTL No. 2002-G13

Effective Date: November 15, 2002

NOTICE TO LESSEES AND OPERATORS OF FEDERAL OIL, GAS, AND SULPHUR
LEASES AND PIPELINE RIGHT-OF-WAY HOLDERS IN THE OUTER CONTINENTAL
SHELF, GULF OF MEXICO OCS REGION

Marine Trash and Debris Awareness and Elimination

This Notice to Lessees and Operators (NTL) is issued pursuant to 30 CFR 250.103 and supersedes NTL No. 98-27, effective December 1, 1998, on this subject. This NTL supplements information from NTL 98-27 with additional guidance to prevent intentional and/or accidental introduction of debris into the marine environment. This NTL applies to all existing and future oil and gas operations in the Gulf of Mexico OCS.

Background

Marine trash and debris pose a threat to fish, marine mammals, sea turtles, and other marine animals; cause costly delays and repairs for commercial and recreational boating interests; detract from the aesthetic quality of recreational shore fronts; and increase the cost of beach and park maintenance. As oil and gas industry activities expand into deeper waters, the number of species of protected marine mammals exposed to marine debris is increasing and now includes the sperm whale, an endangered species, as well as several threatened species of sea turtles.

Since oil and gas operations in the Gulf of Mexico contribute to this chronic problem, 30 CFR 250.300(a) and (b)(6) prohibit you from deliberately discharging containers and other similar materials (i.e., trash and debris) into the marine environment, and 30 CFR 250.300(c) requires you to make durable identification markings on equipment, tools and containers (especially drums), and other material.

Furthermore, the intentional jettisoning of trash has been the subject of strict laws such as MARPOL-Annex V and the Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act, and regulations imposed by various agencies including the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

These USCG and EPA regulations further require that you become more proactive in avoiding accidental loss of solid waste items by developing waste management plans, posting informational placards, manifesting trash sent to shore, and using special precautions such as covering outside trash bins to prevent accidental loss of solid waste.

Therefore, you should exercise special caution when you handle and dispose of small items and packaging materials, particularly those made of non-biodegradable, environmentally persistent materials such as plastic or glass that can be lost in the marine environment and washed ashore. Increasing your individual workers' awareness of the problem and emphasizing their responsibilities will reduce the litter problem and control the unintended loss of items such as empty buckets, hard hats, shrink wrap, strip lumber and pipe thread protectors.

Your adherence to these requirements has reduced, if not eliminated, trash intentionally jettisoned into the Gulf of Mexico. However, the MMS is still concerned about the accidental loss of articles from structures and vessels. In some cases, this results from poor waste management practices (e.g., no lids or unsecured lids on waste receptacles), but in others it is caused by the failure of individuals to secure materials and personal belongings aboard vessels and facilities. To reduce further the accidental introduction of marine trash and debris into the Gulf of Mexico, you must immediately implement the following programs.

Marine Trash and Debris Placards

You must prepare placards that include each of the information text boxes in Appendix 1 of this NTL and post them in prominent places on vessels and structures in your exploration, development, and production activities by March 31, 2003. All of the placards depicted, with the language specified displayed on at least a 5x8 inch format, must be placed on every offshore oil and gas facility that has sleeping or food preparation capabilities, as well as vessels. These signs must be displayed at line-of-sight height in all of the following locations: For offshore platforms and drilling rigs, placards must be placed at boat landings and heliports, in the mess area, and in the recreation or training or orientation area. For supply and other support vessels, placards must be placed at the entrance to living quarters, in the mess area, and on the bridge. These notices should be referenced, and their contents explained, during any initial orientation given on the facility or vessel for visitors or occupants. Placards must be sturdy enough to withstand the local environment and must be replaced when damage or wear compromises readability.

Marine Trash and Debris Training Video

You must obtain copies of the training video entitled "All Washed Up: The Beach Litter Problem" produced by the Offshore Operators Committee. You may obtain this video by writing to Mr. Dewayne Misner at dewayne.misner@oceanenergy.com. Ensure that all offshore personnel, including your contractors and other support services-related personnel (for example, helicopter pilots, vessel captains and boat crews) have viewed this video by March 31, 2003. Thereafter, all personnel must view the marine trash and debris training video annually. Certify in writing that all such offshore personnel have viewed the training video and make such certifications available to authorized MMS personnel upon request.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) Statement

The PRA (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) requires us to inform you that we collect the information described in this NTL to ensure that you conduct operations in a manner that will not jeopardize threatened or endangered species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat that has been designated for those species. We protect all proprietary information submitted according to the Freedom of Information Act and 30 CFR 250.196. An agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number. You are not obligated to respond until the OMB has approved this collection of information. We are requesting OMB approval under emergency processing and approval is pending for the "training video record-keeping" requirement. We estimate the hour burden to be one-half hour per training certification. The placard postings are exempt from the PRA requirements. Direct comments regarding the burden or any other aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, Mail Stop 4230, Minerals Management Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

In addition, this NTL refers to information collection requirements under 30 CFR 250, Subpart C. The OMB has approved all of the information collection requirements in these regulations and assigned OMB control number 1010-0057.

Contact

Please contact Ms. Carol Roden at (504) 736-2877 if you have any questions regarding this NTL.

Chris C. Oynes
Regional Director

Appendix 1

Marine Debris Placards_

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

Marine debris is any object or fragment of wood, metal, glass, rubber, plastic, cloth, paper or any other man-made item or material that is lost or discarded in the marine environment. Marine debris may be intentionally dumped, accidentally dropped, or indirectly deposited. Whatever the source, marine debris is a direct result of human activities on land and at sea. Depending upon its composition, marine debris may sink to the seafloor, drift in the water column, or float on the surface of the sea. Certain debris, such as plastics, can persist for hundreds of years in the marine environment without decomposing.

WARNING!

YOUR ACTIONS MAY SUBJECT YOU TO SEVERE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES!

The disposal and/or discharge of any solid waste anywhere in the marine environment (other than ground-up food particles) is strictly prohibited by U.S. Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency regulations. **THIS INCLUDES MATERIALS OR DEBRIS ACCIDENTALLY LOST OVERBOARD.**

The disposal of equipment, cables, chains, containers or other materials into offshore waters is prohibited by the Minerals Management Service (30 CFR 250.300(b)(6)). **THIS INCLUDES MATERIALS OR DEBRIS ACCIDENTALLY LOST OVERBOARD.**

ATTENTION!

MARINE DEBRIS MAY CAUSE SEVERE ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE!_

Marine debris discarded or lost from offshore and coastal sources may injure or kill fish, marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds and other wildlife.

Thousands of marine animals, including marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds, die every year from entanglement in fishing line, strapping bands, discarded ropes and nets and plastic six-pack rings. Additionally, unknown numbers of marine animals die each year from internal injury, intestinal blockage and starvation as a result of ingesting marine debris.

Marine debris fouls boat propellers and clogs water intake ports on engines thereby endangering the safety of fishermen and boaters and resulting in heavy loss of time and money.

Marine debris detracts from the aesthetic quality of recreational beaches and shorelines and increases the cost of park and beach maintenance.

SECURE ALL LOOSE ARTICLES!

NOAA Fisheries now expects petroleum industry personnel to pick up and recover any articles lost overboard from boats and offshore structures as safety conditions permit.

Protect marine animals, as well as your valuable time and money, by doing the following to prevent accidental loss of these items:

Properly securing all materials, equipment and personal belongings. Articles such as hardhats, life vests, sunglasses, cigarette lighters, parts bags, buckets, shrink wrap, strip lumber, and pipe thread protectors become marine debris when lost overboard.

Making sure that all trash receptacles have tight fitting lids and that the lids are used.

Providing and using secure cigarette butt containers. Cigarette butts are one of the most common forms of marine debris. Many cigarette butts contain some form of plastic and do not decompose in the ocean. Cigarette butts pose a major threat to marine wildlife as they resemble food and cause gut blockages and starvation when ingested.

Doing your part to eliminate marine debris. Encourage others to be responsible about marine debris by making suggestions to secure potential marine debris on your boat or structure or by participating in a beach cleanup.