

Offshore drilling: industry rates its own equipment substandard

The technology used to extract oil from reservoirs in offshore drilling – particularly in deep water – has fallen behind engineers' ability to find and drill for that oil, raising safety concerns.

More Environment



Oil and gas escape from the top of the new containment cap at the site of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico July 13. BP needed to essentially build the new cap from scratch after the original blowout preventer on the well failed on April 20. BP/Reuters

Enlarge

About these ads

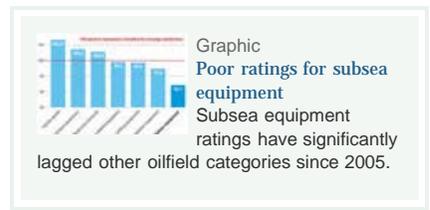


Like You and 2 others like this. 2 people like this. Admin Page Error Unlike

Subscribe to the weekly MONITOR and SAVE 71%

By Matt Rocheleau, Contributor / July 21, 2010

Even as it opposes the Obama administration moratorium on offshore drilling, the oil industry has doubts about the quality and long-term viability of equipment that it uses to extract oil from deep-water wells, such as the one at the center of the Gulf oil spill.



In arguing for a moratorium, Interior Department Secretary Ken Salazar has said that "fundamental questions about deep-water safety" remain. The offshore industry counters that the amount of crude spilled and the number of spills hit a record low this past decade.

Related Stories

- Offshore drilling ban: Will revised moratorium appease courts?
- Studies suggest MMS knew blowout preventers had 'critical' flaws
- Offshore drilling moratorium: US cites

Yet both industry experts and managerial personnel acknowledge that the technology used to remove offshore oil from its reservoirs – particularly in deep water – has been outstripped by engineers' ability to

Most viewed

- JournoList: Is 'call them racists' a liberal media tactic?
- R136a1 is the most massive star discovered so far
- Bed bugs: Victoria's Secret closure points to a bed bug comeback
- China oil spill spreads but not as big as BP oil spill in Gulf
- Why Rod Blagojevich didn't testify at his corruption trial
- 40 ton whale nearly destroys sailboat off South African coast
- Michael Jordan falling down the list of US most popular athlete
- Lucille Ball awards to go to daughter; love letters will be auctioned
- North Korea sanctions announced by Clinton part of a diplomatic dance for South Korea
- Blog: Unemployment extension? Pooh. North Dakota hits jobs record.

blowout preventers' weak spot

find and drill for that oil.

That has left members of the oil industry dissatisfied with the tools they need to work in one of earth's most challenging environments. While there is no evidence yet that equipment was to blame for the Deepwater Horizon blowout, some industry experts say the quality of deep-water extraction technology is increasingly becoming a concern.

"We believe that the quality, reliability and adequacy of subsea equipment is a potential weak link in the deep-water equation going forward," said a recent report from EnergyPoint Research, an oil-industry marketing company in Houston.

Poor scores in industry survey

Since 2005, subsea equipment has received the lowest annual overall satisfaction rating of the seven oilfield segments tracked by EnergyPoint. While oil company leaders rated every other equipment category above or just slightly below the average overall industry rating – defined by the survey company as 100 percent – subsea equipment scored at 92.1 percent. The next-worst category, downhole completion equipment, scored 5.3 percentage points higher.

In relating the figures to an academic letter grading system, EnergyPoint's managing director Douglas Sheridan said subsea equipment would be in the D range, close to an F, while every other equipment category surveyed is in the B range.

Among all subsea products surveyed, [blowout preventers](#) – the safety device that failed at the Deepwater Horizon's Macondo well – have the lowest satisfaction rating.

Clearly, the industry's improving safety record during the past decade suggests that low satisfaction does not necessarily equate to more accidents. But the low satisfaction does point to a troubling trend in the industry.

Until this past decade, offshore exploratory work looking for wells in areas that have not previously been drilled into for oil was largely ignored because it was less cost effective and riskier than extracting oil either on land or around existing offshore wells in shallower waters. As a result, investment in offshore-equipment research lagged.

This decade, however, the depletion of existing oil reserves and an increase in demand have driven companies into deeper waters.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



Like You and 2 others like this. 2 people like this. · [Admin](#)
Page · [Error](#) Unlike
You like [Offshore drilling: industry rates its own](#)

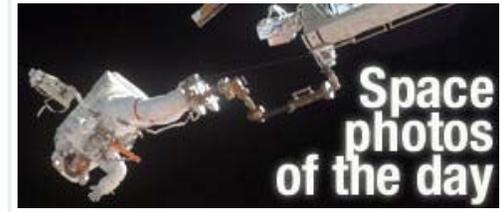
Subscribe to the new weekly Monitor and save 71%!

Photos of the day

07.21.10 »



In Pictures



[Space photos of the day 07/20](#)

Inside CSMonitor.com:



Offshore drilling: industry rates its own equipment substandard

The technology used to extract oil from reservoirs in offshore drilling – particularly in deep water – has fallen behind engineers' ability to find and drill for that oil, raising safety concerns.

Why Rod Blagojevich didn't testify at his corruption trial

Why are dead penguins washing up on Brazil's beaches?

Bed bugs: Victoria's Secret closure points to a bed bug comeback

Global News Blog

China energy use surpasses US. Who didn't see that coming?

About these ads

FREE daily e-mail newsletter

CSMonitor.com top stories, cartoons and photos

[Sign up](#)

[See sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)



What happens when ordinary people decide to pay it forward? Extraordinary change. See how *individuals are making a difference...*



Doug Smith supervises the controversial project that began reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park in 1995, when 14 Canadian wolves were released there.

Today, some 1,500 wolves roam the region, including 171 in the park itself. 'Nature without wolves is not nature,' Dr. Smith says.

'Wolf man' Doug Smith studies Yellowstone's restored predators

'Nature without wolves is not nature,' says the field biologist and project leader

Become part of the Monitor community

15,700 Fans | 5,810 on Twitter | 700K RSS subscribers



Get 4 FREE issues ►►



THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Money »



The New Economy: Same-sex workplace harassment cases on the rise

World »



Global News Blog: Dan Brown take note: Vatican's 'Secret Archives' unveiled

Environment »



Gray wolf comeback worries Midwest

Making a Difference



'Wolf man' Doug Smith studies Yellowstone's restored predators

Money »



The New Economy: Macy's and Target sales hope to draw cautious

World »



Africa Monitor: Rwanda election: Security situation shaky ahead of August

Ads by Google

[\(About these\)](#)

Stop BP's media blackout

BP Victim's are not being told the truth. Don't waive your rights!
HowardJustice.com

Sponsored Links

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Booking Agency | Graphic Design | Speakers Bureau |
| Grabow Entertainment Agency | Logo Design - LogoBee | Christian Speakers |
| Business Resources | Real Estate | Motivational Speakers |
| Business Cards | International Shipping | Sports Speakers Bureaus |
| Checks | Mortgage Calculator | Web Services |

[Is Your Bank Collapsing?](#)

Free list Of Banks Doomed To Fail. The Banks and Brokers X List. Free!

www.MoneyAndMarkets.com

[Drilling & Blasting](#)

Quarries, Construction, Rock Bolting & More. Call Us Today!

www.MDandB.com

Computers
PowerEdge Memory
Charitable Donations
Car Donations
Boat Donations

Moving
Moving Companies
Real Estate

Dedicated Servers
Web Hosting



Ads by Google

[About these ads](#)

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Monitor Topics](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Text](#) | [Specials](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Make Us Your Home Page](#)
[Careers](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Find us online](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Monitor Mall](#) | [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

© The Christian Science Monitor. All Rights Reserved. [Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you. [Privacy Policy](#).



Offshore drilling: industry rates its own equipment substandard

The technology used to extract oil from reservoirs in offshore drilling – particularly in deep water – has fallen behind engineers' ability to find and drill for that oil, raising safety concerns.

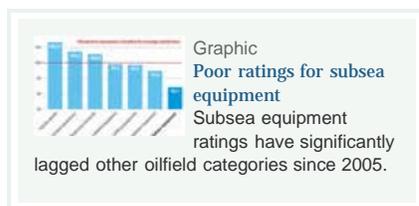
(Page 2 of 2)



Like You and 2 others like this. 2 people like this. · Admin
Page · Error Unlike

Research on deep-water equipment lagging

Dramatic advances in seismic technology have allowed scientists to find remoter reserves more easily, says Hans Juvkam-Wold, professor emeritus in petroleum engineering at Texas A&M University.



But investment in new equipment technology to extract the harder-to-get oil has not kept pace, says James Pappas, vice president for technology at the Research Partnership to Secure Energy for America.

For example, the harsher, less predictable conditions in deep water can have an effect on sensitive fluids that are crucial to drilling, meaning that alternatives need to be developed, says Mr. Pappas.

Moreover, the deep sea remains one of the least explored places on earth, meaning that engineers must rely on estimates in devising deep-water equipment that will be used in environments that can vary greatly

depending on where and how deep a company is drilling.

In deeper waters, thick layers of impermeable salt common in the Gulf of Mexico can make the process more complex in nearly every phase. Salt is tougher to drill through, it can be a sign of oil under higher amounts of pressure, and it can add to corrosion of subsea equipment.

Still low market demand

Because deep-water drilling is still a small fraction of overall drilling, the market for better

More Environment



About these ads

Subscribe to the weekly **MONITOR** and **SAVE 71%**

Most viewed

1. [JournoList: Is 'call them racists' a liberal media tactic?](#)
2. [40 ton whale nearly destroys sailboat off South African coast](#)
3. [R136a1 is the most massive star discovered so far](#)
4. [Bed bugs: Victoria's Secret closure points to a bed bug comeback](#)
5. [China oil spill spreads but not as big as BP oil spill in Gulf](#)
6. [Why Rod Blagojevich didn't testify at his corruption trial](#)
7. [Michael Jordan falling down the list of US most popular athlete](#)
8. [Lucille Ball awards to go to daughter; love letters will be auctioned](#)
9. [Blog: Unemployment extension? Pooh. North Dakota hits jobs record.](#)
10. [North Korea sanctions announced by Clinton part of a diplomatic dance for South Korea](#)

equipment is small, says Iraj Ershaghi, director of the petroleum engineering program at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Additionally, the oil industry is generally conservative when it comes to adopting technologically enhanced equipment, he said. Many in the industry feel new devices take away from the sense of familiarity and comfort with the equipment they already work with, and thus increase risk.

But there is a realization that the lack of quality deep-water extraction equipment needs to be addressed. While subsea equipment has improved in recent years, "it still may not be quite good enough to get the job done safely," says EnergyPoint's Mr. Sheridan.

Others feel the equipment is adequate, for now, but that new research is needed for the future.

"Equipment-wise, we are OK now," says Dr. Ershaghi. But "it's getting tougher and tougher and tougher [to extract subsea oil]. We need better technology."

Related:

- [Offshore drilling ban: Will revised moratorium appease courts?](#)
- [Studies suggest MMS knew blowout preventers had 'critical' flaws](#)
- [Offshore drilling moratorium: US cites blowout preventers' weak spot](#)

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



Like You and 2 others like this. 2 people like this. · [Admin](#)
Page · [Error](#) Unlike
You like Offshore drilling: industry rates its own

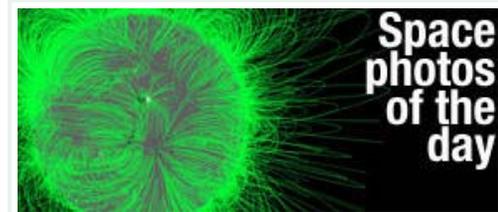
[Subscribe to the new weekly Monitor and save 71%!](#)

Photos of the day

07.21.10 >



In Pictures



Space photos of the day 07/21

Inside CSMonitor.com:



Offshore drilling: industry rates its own equipment substandard

The technology used to extract oil from reservoirs in offshore drilling – particularly in deep water – has fallen behind engineers' ability to find and drill for that oil, raising safety concerns.

Why Rod Blagojevich didn't testify at his corruption trial

Why are dead penguins washing up on Brazil's beaches?

Bed bugs: Victoria's Secret closure points to a bed bug comeback

Global News Blog

China energy use surpasses US. Who didn't see that coming?

[About these ads](#)

FREE daily e-mail newsletter

CSMonitor.com top stories, cartoons and photos

[Sign up](#)



[See sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

What happens when ordinary people decide to pay it forward? Extraordinary change. See how *individuals are making a difference...*



Doug Smith supervises the controversial project that began reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park in 1995, when 14 Canadian wolves were released there.

Today, some 1,500 wolves roam the region, including 171 in the park itself. 'Nature without wolves is not nature,' Dr. Smith says.

'Wolf man' Doug Smith studies Yellowstone's restored predators

'Nature without wolves is not nature,' says the field biologist and project leader

Become part of the Monitor community

15,700 Fans | 5,810 on Twitter | 700K RSS subscribers



Get 4 FREE issues ►►



THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Money »



The New Economy: Same-sex workplace harassment cases on the rise

World »



Global News Blog: Dan Brown take note: Vatican's 'Secret Archives' unveiled

Environment »



Gray wolf comeback worries Midwest

Making a Difference



'Wolf man' Doug Smith studies Yellowstone's restored predators

Money »



The New Economy: Macy's and Target sales hope to draw cautious

World »



Africa Monitor: Rwanda election: Security situation shaky ahead of August

Ads by Google

[\(About these\)](#)

[BP Oil Spill Disaster](#)

Oil Spill Affect You? Visit Us For Free Resource Guide.

[Gulf-OilSpill-Sheller-Attorneys.com](#)

Sponsored Links

Booking Agency
Grabow Entertainment Agency
Business Resources
Business Cards
Checks

Graphic Design
Logo Design - LogoBee
Real Estate
International Shipping
Mortgage Calculator

Speakers Bureau
Christian Speakers
Motivational Speakers
Sports Speakers Bureaus
Web Services

[Is Your Bank In Trouble?](#)

Free list Of Banks Doomed To Fail. The Banks and Brokers X List. Free!

www.MoneyAndMarkets.com

[Oil Sands Of Canada](#)

News And Discussion On Environment, Economy And Energy Supply Issues.

www.CanadasOilsands.ca

Computers
PowerEdge Memory
Charitable Donations
Car Donations
Boat Donations

Moving
Moving Companies
Real Estate

Dedicated Servers
Web Hosting



Ads by Google

[About these ads](#)

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Monitor Topics](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Text](#) | [Specials](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Make Us Your Home Page](#)
[Careers](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Find us online](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Monitor Mall](#) | [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

© The Christian Science Monitor. All Rights Reserved. [Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you. [Privacy Policy](#).