



Gulf oil spill a learning experience, say BP executives

Published: Wednesday, August 11, 2010, 5:28 AM Updated: Wednesday, August 11, 2010, 6:31 AM



Jeff Amy, Press-Register



[View full size](#)

(Press-Register/Michael Marshall)

"Orange mousse" oil is visible just off of the beaches of Gulf Shores in the Gulf of Mexico on June 13, 2010. BP executives said the oil spill has led to breakthroughs in monitoring and cleaning oil. The Gulf of Mexico oil spill has been a lot of things, including a learning experience, two BP PLC executives told the federal government's top drilling regulator Tuesday.

Speaking were Richard Morrison, BP's vice president of Gulf of Mexico operations, and Richard Lynch, BP's vice president of drillings and completion. They said spill response has led to technical breakthroughs in how to monitor and clean up oil, and created a storehouse of equipment and knowledge.

"I hope this gives you some insight and, I hope, comfort into our industry's newly expanded effort to fight this spill," Morrison said. "We hope this doesn't happen again, but if it does, we'll be ready."

Michael Bromwich, who was appointed to reform offshore drilling regulation, was in Mobile on Tuesday gathering information on the industry's readiness to respond to future spills.

It was the second of eight scheduled meetings. The third meeting is set for 9 a.m. today at New World

Landing in Pensacola. Another is supposed to follow later in Biloxi.

ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell and ConocoPhillips said last week that they would create a \$1 billion system to handle blowouts and deepwater spills. And Bromwich said Tuesday that BP had agreed to submit two documents on "lessons learned" after the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded -- one covering spill containment and response and another on drilling safety.

Officials in Louisiana and elsewhere have pressured Bromwich and the Obama administration to lift a drilling moratorium -- which is set to run until Nov. 30 -- saying that too many jobs will be lost.

Steve Russell, a Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce official who has led an effort to bolster local drilling-related companies and recruit new jobs, reiterated the chamber's support of offshore drilling, including in areas of the eastern Gulf of Mexico, where Florida politicians oppose expansion.

He said that local companies are worried that their work will run out sometime next year.

Russell said the government already has had plenty of time to enact new regulations.

Bromwich has said he wants to hold the public meetings before making any recommendation.

His opening remarks seemed to contradict BP's statements that its hard-won lessons will reduce future risks. "Industry representatives have admitted, repeatedly, in public that they are not well-equipped to handle worst-case scenarios," he said.

Bromwich did say after the session that the moratorium is unlikely to be extended past Nov. 30.

A handful of anti-drilling activists who gathered outside the meeting at the Battle House Hotel were dubious of claims of improved spill response. Local Sierra Club member David Underhill wore tape over his mouth in protest of Bromwich's decision to accept public comment only in writing instead of allowing people like him to speak during the forums.

He held a poster that said, "They lied about the size of the leak. Are their words about future safety true?"

© 2010 al.com. All rights reserved.