

PUBLICATION

Federal Agency Serves Subpoena on Black Elk

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The U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board has served Black Elk Energy with a subpoena in response to the oil platform explosion in the Gulf of Mexico on November 16, 2012. The Board has also served a subpoena on Grand Isle Shipyard, the Louisiana company that supplied Black Elk with the platform workers. Twenty-six workers were on the platform at the time of the explosion; two workers have died, three required hospitalization, and one remains missing. Twenty-eight gallons of oil may have spilled into the Gulf. It is requesting information regarding witnesses, physical evidence, combustible gas detectors, job safety analyses, work orders, work permits, policies, and inventories. Responses from both companies are due November 30, 2012. The Board has not yet launched a formal investigation. The Board is involved in six current investigations involving a fire and/or explosion at an oil and gas facility. All of the current investigations involve incidents on land. The Board has also conducted an inquiry into the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion, although it did not receive all of the records it subpoenaed from drilling contractor Transocean because the company challenged the Board's authority to conduct such an inquiry.

The U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board conducts root cause investigations of chemical accidents at fixed industrial sites. It has no regulatory authority, but it can issue non-mandatory recommendations to federal regulatory agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency.