



Letter to the Editor

November 5, 2009

Hurricanes threaten drilling enterprise

I attended the drilling symposium and, while disappointed the experts represented the pro-drilling side, I was pleased to submit a question. I asked about oil industry infrastructure damage from hurricanes.

The U. S. Coast Guard documented over 9 million gallons (mg) of oil spills following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita of 2005. Most of the spills were attributed to pipeline leaks (2.6 mg), coastal storage facilities (5 mg), and collisions with damaged and submerged oil rigs (1.4 mg). In 2008, much additional rig infrastructure was damaged by Hurricane Ike. The moderator misread my question and told the audience that the spills were *not* from pipelines but limited to coastal storage facilities. The panelists acknowledged that hurricane storm surge is a real threat to coastal storage facilities but never discussed the oil spills caused by offshore pipeline leaks or the large number of oil rigs damaged by hurricanes.

From very limited discussion of risks, Tuesday's *Democrat* headline concluded "risk is low." Three hurricanes in three years affected the oil infrastructure in Texas and Louisiana, but from 2004 to 2005, seven hurricanes struck Florida. Oil spills in hurricanes are a certainty — this risk is *not* low.

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