

# Experts Accuse BP of Negligence in Pre-Spill Drilling Operation

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson posted in [Wrongful Death](#)

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An independent panel convened by the National Academy of Engineering has just released its report on what caused the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon well, which resulted in the [wrongful deaths](#) of 11 workers, the largest oil spill in history, and billions of dollars in damage.

The report, which was commissioned in May by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, accuses BP and its contractors of missing and even ignoring warning signs before the blowout, showing an "insufficient consideration of risk," and relying on key personnel who may not have had sufficient expertise.

Donald Winter, chairman of the 15-member study committee and a professor of engineering practice at the University of Michigan, said that the failures that led to the fatal accident and the Gulf Oil Spill would be unacceptable in companies that work in areas with similar levels of risk, such as aviation and nuclear power.

"A great number of decisions, all of which appear to us to be questionable ... also appeared to be justified by those individuals and those companies involved," said Winter in an interview with the Associated Press. "In an operation like this you have to recognize the uncertainties of where you are going."

But they apparently did not -- and neither the companies nor federal regulators recognized or corrected the flawed decisions that were made.

## **BP and Contractors Failed to Learn From 'Near Misses' on Oil Rig**

Interior Secretary Salazar asked the National Academy of Engineering for the investigation in order to provide "an independent, science-based understanding of what happened."

According to the 28-page report, BP, Transocean, Halliburton and Cameron International there were several "near misses" that could have caused disaster before the eventual blowout and fatal explosion. The companies failed to learn from those mistakes.

For example, several tests indicated that the cement at the bottom of the well was not going to be sufficient to hold back oil and gas and that relying on it could cause a blowout. More than a month before the blowout, BP lost drilling equipment in the well, which should have alerted the company to the risk that the blowout preventer or other materials could be lost.

The report concludes that even though drilling an oil well more than three miles below the surface of the ocean inherently involves significant unknowns, the companies appeared to have no recognition of the risks. Worse, when known risks were revealed by their own tests and mistakes, the information was not used to mitigate those risks.

The commission did not determine a final cause of the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon. Unfortunately, the report says it may never be possible to establish exactly what caused the blowout, the explosion, the [wrongful deaths](#) and the oil spill because so much evidence was lost when the rig sank. Still, the commission will continue to investigate and plans to release its final report in June.

**Source:** Associated Press, "[Experts: BP ignored warning signs on doomed well](#)," November 17, 2010