Secretaries Chu and Salazar Lead Administration Team Offering Federal Scientific and Technological Support to BP Engineers

US Department of Energy

HOUSTON, TX -- At the request of the President, Secretary Chu and Secretary Salazar traveled to Houston today to participate in meetings with DOE and national lab staff, industry officials and other engineers and scientists involved in finding solutions to cap the flow of oil and contain the spill. Secretary Salazar and Secretary Chu conferred at the BP Command Center in Houston with teams of federal and industry scientists and engineers who are using cutting-edge technological resources and innovative ideas to find solutions to containing the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill and protecting Gulf Coast communities.

"President Obama has asked us to bring a team of top administration officials and government scientists here for an extensive discussion with BP officials on how to urgently deal with the critical challenges of controlling and sealing their damaged wellhead and containing a major oil spill that threatens Gulf Coast communities and natural resources," Secretary Salazar said. "This is a vital national priority and we cannot and will not rest until BP has capped the well and controlled the spill."

"Department of Energy scientists from the National Laboratories have been working with the operations experts at the BP Command center on ways to determine what is happening inside the BOP (Blowout Preventer) atop the damaged wellhead," Secretary Chu said. "They are using the extensive resources of the lab network, including high powered supercomputers to assist with imaging and sampling of the seafloor; measuring pressures in the blowout preventer stack; and analyzing the riser structure and fluid flows."

"Putting our best scientific minds together with BP's deepwater drilling engineers will enable these dedicated professionals to examine every feasible means and practical solution to this environmental crisis in the Gulf of Mexico," Chu said.

Department of Energy Activities in Response to the Deepwater Oil Spill

Secretary Chu assembled a group of top scientific experts from inside and outside of government to join in today's discussions in Houston about possible solutions. This team includes:

- Dr. Tom Hunter, Director of the Department of Energy's Sandia National Labs
- Dr. George A. Cooper, an expert in materials science and retired professor from UC Berkeley

- Richard Lawrence Garwin, a physicist and IBM Fellow Emeritus
- Dr. Jonathan I. Katz, professor of physics at Washington University
- Dr. Alexander H. Slocum, professor of mechanical engineering at MIT

Read additional details about the Department of Energy's activities [1] (pdf - 23 kb) in providing technical and scientific assistance to the response efforts.

Department of the Interior Activities in Response to the Deepwater Oil Spill

On Friday, Secretary Salazar dispatched Dr. Marcia McNutt, the director of the U.S. Geological Survey, to the BP Command Center in Houston to help coordinate the joint efforts of federal scientists who are working with BP engineers to address several technological challenges and approaches to securing the damaged well head, stopping the leak and minimizing impacts from the spill. McNutt has the resources of almost 10,000 USGS scientists ready to assist the effort.

Salazar also met with a manufacturer of Blowout Preventer (BOP) devices last week to learn about its operation and the factors that may have caused it to malfunction. The BOPs contain mechanisms designed to shut off the flow of oil and gas, either on command or automatically, when a wellhead is damaged or experiences a blowout. Federal and company engineers are seeking to determine why the BOP atop the *Deepwater Horizon* well failed to activate as designed.

In addition, Secretary Salazar has undertaken several initiatives in response to BP's spill, including:

- Announced that no applications for permits [2] to drill will go forward until the Department completes a 30-day review of safety processes that President Obama requested;
- Ordered immediate inspections [3] of all deepwater operations in the Gulf of Mexico. The inspections of deepwater drilling rigs found Incidents of Non-Compliance (INC) on two rigs. Those violations were corrected and no other violations were found. View the inspection report [4] (pdf - 93 kb). Inspections of deepwater production platforms is ongoing.
- Issued a safety notice to all operators, reminding them of their responsibilities to follow MMS regulations and to conduct full and thorough tests of their equipment;
- Established the Outer Continental Shelf Safety Oversight Board [5] (pdf - 866 kb) within the Department of the Interior with top officials to strengthen Outer Continental Shelf safety and improve overall management, regulation, and oversight of OCS operations;
- Launched a joint investigation [6] of the incident with the U.S. Coast Guard to determine what happened.

Information on the federal response effort is online at DeepwaterHorizonResponse.com [7].

Images from the Houston visit today will be available from Department of the

Interior's Photo Galleries [8].

SOURCE [9]

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Links:
[1] http://www.energy.gov/news/documents/Deepwater_Response.pdf
[2] http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Salazar-Meets-with-BP-Officials-and-Engineers-at-Houston-Command-Center-to-Review-Response-Efforts-Activities.cfm
[3] http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Salazar-Launches-Full-Review-of-Offshore-Drilling-Safety-Issues-during-Visit-to-Oil-Spill-Command-Centers-on-Gulf-Coast.cfm
[4] http://www.doi.gov/deepwaterhorizon/upload/05-11-10-MMS-Deepwater-Horizon-Rig-Inspection-Report.pdf
[5] http://www.doi.gov/news/doinews/upload/Order-3298.pdf
[6] http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/SECRETARY-NAPOLITANO-AND-SECRETARY-SALAZAR-LAUNCH-FULL-INVESTIGATION-OF-DEEPWATER-HORIZON-INCIDENT-IN-THE-GULF-OF-MEXICO.cfm
[7] http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/
[8] http://www.doi.gov/news/photos/
[9] http://www.energy.gov/news/8980.htm