Judge Sets Meeting to Discuss BP Plea Deal

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A federal judge has scheduled a closed-door meeting Thursday to discuss BP's agreement to plead guilty to criminal charges stemming from its deadly 2010 rig explosion and response to the massive Gulf oil spill.

BP PLC is expected plead not guilty on Tuesday during its initial court appearance and then plead guilty at a later date. U.S. District Judge Sarah Vance plans to meet Thursday in her chambers with prosecutors and BP attorneys to discuss scheduling matters.

Earlier this month, BP agreed to pay a record $4.5 billion in penalties and plead guilty to a raft of charges to resolve the Justice Department's criminal probe of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. The deal, which is subject to Vance's approval, calls for BP to plead guilty to charges involving the deaths of 11 rig workers and for lying to Congress about how much oil was spewing from its blown-out well.

Meanwhile, BP rig supervisors Robert Kaluza and Donald Vidrine and former BP executive David Rainey are scheduled to be arraigned Wednesday on criminal charges related to the blowout and spill response.

Kaluza and Vidrine are charged with manslaughter in the rig workers' deaths. They are accused of disregarding abnormal high-pressure readings that should have been glaring indications of trouble just before the blowout.

Rainey is charged with concealing information from Congress about the amount of oil that was spewing from BP's Macondo well.

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