Natural Gas Well Leaking in Gulf Off the La. Coast

JANET McCONNAUGHEY, Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Natural gas leaked Tuesday from an old, non-producing well at an oil and gas platform in the Gulf of Mexico about 75 miles off the Louisiana coast after a crew working to plug the well lost control of it, the Coast Guard said.

A crew of five was working to plug the old well permanently when saltwater and a small amount of natural gas and the light oil and water mixture called condensate began escaping Monday, according to a statement from Talos Energy LLC President Timothy S. Duncan.

"In an abundance of caution, we decided to evacuate the platform and mobilize our spill response team," the statement from the Houston-based company said. The crew got off safely.

Duncan said a crew from Wild Well Control Inc. was working Tuesday to get the well under control, and expected to do so Wednesday.

The well did not blow out and there was no explosion or fire on the platform, Coast Guard Lt. Lily Zepeda said.

She said a mixture of water and gas was leaking from the well, which is in water 144 feet deep. An aerial survey on Tuesday revealed a rainbow sheen four miles wide and three-quarters of a mile long on the Gulf surface, she said.

Based on the size of the sheen, Duncan said, about six barrels of light condensate had been released. It was all expected to evaporate, he said.

There is no indication the leak will take on the scale of the 2010 blowout of BP's Macondo well about 100 miles to the east, Zepeda said. The BP blowout resulted in more than 200 million gallons of oil escaping from the well, a mile deep in the Gulf.

The well had been developed in the 1970s. It was being plugged because it needed "artificial lift" to get anything out, and then what emerged at low pressure was mostly water — 1,150 barrels of water, nine barrels of condensate and 65,000 cubic feet of gas per day, Duncan said.

"We believe that the age of the tubing may have contributed to the incident," the statement said.

Two other wells that were producing on the platform were closed off.

The company bought the well's owner, Energy Resources Technology GOM Inc., also

of Houston, in February.

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Online:

Talos: http://www.talosenergyllc.com/ [1]

Wild Well Control Inc.: http://wildwell.com/ [2]

U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement: http://www.bsee.gov/ [3]

Coast Guard: http://www.uscg.mil/ [4]

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