

# Storms Threaten Relief Well Progress

JEFFREY COLLINS, Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — BP crews were drilling cautiously Monday to finish a relief well designed to shoot a permanent plug into the oil gusher that polluted the Gulf of Mexico for more than 12 weeks.

Engineers were drilling the final 100 feet of the well in 20- to 30-foot increments before stopping to check it is still on track to hit the busted well, said retired Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen, the government's point man overseeing the cleanup operation. They hope the two well bores will intersect by the end of the week.

The oil is already being kept in its underground reservoir by thousands of gallons of mud and cement that were poured last week through a cap that had been keeping the crude out of the water since July 15. The cement cap poured on top of the oil hardened enough over the weekend to create a solid seal, BP said.

No one at BP or with the government has been willing to declare victory over the spill, but Allen said Monday he is confident that that day isn't far away.

"This step, in our view, will permanently seal the well," said Allen, who plans a three-day trip to Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama this week to talk with local officials about how to accelerate clean up efforts as the peak of hurricane season approaches.

An estimated 207 million gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf after the BP-leased Deepwater Horizon rig exploded and sank off Louisiana on April 20. The explosion killed 11 workers and sent crude into delicate coastal marshes and tar balls washing on to beaches.

BP's costs for responding to the spill have risen to \$6.1 billion, the company said in a Monday news release.

With the oil stopped, attention this week turns to the so-called "bottom kill." Once the wells intersect, engineers will pump more mud and cement into the busted well to completely seal it.

One factor that could complicate drilling and cleanup work this week is a cluster of storms over Florida expected to move across the state and along the northern Gulf.

The National Hurricane Center only gives it a slim chance of developing into a tropical depression or tropical storm in the next few days, but it should still bring a greater chance of heavy rain and thunderstorms by Wednesday. And if it does develop further, gusty winds and choppy seas could follow, said Tim Destri, a senior meteorologist with the weather service's New Orleans office.

## Storms Threaten Relief Well Progress

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

---

Allen said he is watching the storms, but currently doesn't have any plans to suspend drilling the relief well or cleanup operations.

Along the Gulf Coast, life is different. In tiny Theriot, La., the bayou-country, pre-shrimp season tradition known as the "Blessing of the Boats" went on with barbecued chicken, smoked sausage and potato salad instead of the usual shrimp and crab.

Louisiana has set Aug. 16 as the opening for a fall shrimp season along the coast, but some waters will likely remain closed as federal authorities test the safety of the seafood.

"I got a boat that's ready," said Ravin Lacoste, 57. "But we don't know what's going to open up."

*Kevin McGill in Theriot, La., contributed to this report.*

**Source URL (retrieved on 04/01/2015 - 2:27am):**

[http://www.chem.info/product-releases/2010/08/storms-threaten-relief-well-progress?qt-recent\\_content=0](http://www.chem.info/product-releases/2010/08/storms-threaten-relief-well-progress?qt-recent_content=0)