

# SAFETY ALERT



**Safety Alert No. 353**  
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## Offshore Employees Fall Through Grating and Open Hole



*Incident site at EI 331 B – photo taken May 29<sup>th</sup>*



*Incident site at GC 205 A – photo taken June 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Recently at Eugene Island Block 331, Platform “B,” a night-time production operator on a fixed facility was identified as missing from the platform during morning rounds. The personnel onboard noticed a section of grating displaced in the upright position with the missing person’s hardhat and clipboard next to the grating in the wellbay deck. The open hole measured approximately 93-inches long by 13-1/2 inches wide and was approximately 45 feet to the water’s surface. Preliminary information indicates that prior to the incident the wellbay deck area was taped off with red “DANGER” tape, but the area was not hard barricaded to prevent flow of personnel.

A second incident took place at Green Canyon Block 205 “A”. A wireline crew had completed work on a well which was properly barricaded. At approximately 2300 hours, two employees went to replace the well access hatch cover over the well on the drill deck. Preliminary information indicates that each of the two employees inadvertently picked up the wrong hatch cover (identified in the photograph above with a red arrow). Each employee grabbed one handle of the cover, which was the same color as the deck and had no well identifying information on it. This action unknowingly created an open hole; and as the employees moved the hatch, one of the employees stepped and fell through the hole to the deck below – approximately 90 feet.

The exact causes of these incidents are now under investigation. Because the potential factors involved in these incidents may be common to many facilities on the Federal Outer Continental Shelf. BSEE recommends all operators and contractors inspect their facilities and communicate the associated hazards to all personnel.

**Additionally, BSEE recommends that operators consider the following:**

- Review this Safety Alert with your crew and discuss hazardous areas and encourage feedback to ensure understanding.
- Conduct a review on the integrity of decks, grating, and structural and support beams on your facility. If an area of marginal or suspect strength is identified, ensure that it is clearly marked, appropriate mitigation actions are taken, and employees are informed of those zones.
- Conduct a review of your facility to identify any open holes or surfaces that are not capable of supporting personnel and, if such an area or open hole is identified, ensure that it has been properly barricaded and/or covered.
- Conduct a review of your facility to confirm that all grating and flooring sections are securely fastened to the underlying structural members. Access should be prevented to areas where the grating and flooring sections are not securely fastened to the underlying structural members or barricaded as described below.
- To prevent the flow of personnel into hazardous areas, verify all barricades:
  - have a top rail and middle rail;
  - are at least 42 inches in height and capable of withstanding a load of at least 200 lbs. applied in any direction.
- If an open hole is found that cannot be immediately barricaded as described above, identify an Open Hole Attendant / Hole Watch, with no other duties – and ensure that the person is equipped with adequate fall protection at all times.
- Management and facility supervisors should ensure the workspace organization, proper labeling of equipment and the conduct of operations are fully and constantly reviewed for safety hazards before and during operations.
- Operators should ensure that all personnel wear fall protection when necessary and that a secure connection for the fall protection be provided and used.
- Ensure that personnel confirm that job safety analyses align with approved procedures and address hazards specific to the job. Additionally, task supervision should ensure and represent an orderly completion of job steps.

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A **Safety Alert** is a tool used by BSEE to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that should help prevent the recurrence of such an incident on the Outer Continental Shelf.