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Industry Beat

Spotlight on MINING

Deepwater Horizon report faults industry, regulators

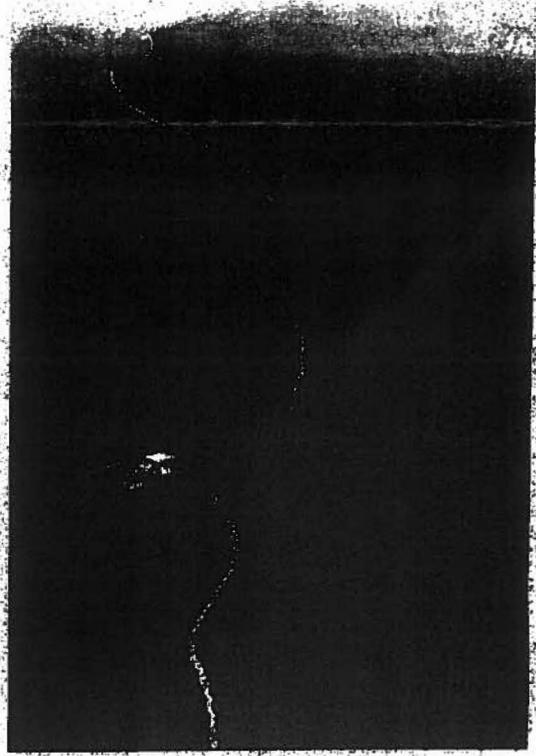
WASHINGTON - A new report identifies a lack of safety management, ineffective regulatory oversight and poor safety culture as factors in the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The report, released Dec. 14 by the nonprofit National Academy of Engineering, claims the companies involved with the drilling operation in the Gulf of Mexico failed to plan for safety challenges and made a series of "questionable" decisions leading up to the explosion that killed 11 workers.

The offshore drilling industry and regulators relied on blowout preventer systems despite past warnings of the equipment's potential to fail in an emergency, and management and crew also missed signs of the impending well blowout, the report stated.

The report advises companies to take a "system safety" approach to managing hazards and said regulators should combine strong industry safety goals with mandatory oversight during drilling operations. Other recommendations address fostering safety culture, improving reporting for safety-related incidents, and expanding safety research and development.

"The need to maintain domestic sources of oil is great, but so is the need to protect the lives of those who work in the offshore drilling industry,



as well as protect the viability of the Gulf of Mexico region," Donald C. Winter, chair of the committee that wrote the report and an engineering professor at the University of Michigan, said in an NAE press release. "Industry and regulators need to include a factual assessment of all the risks in deepwater drilling operations in their decisions and make the overall safety of the many complex systems involved a top priority."