

Summary: Unsubstantiated Allegations That Offshore Company Falsified Incident-Related Repair Documents to BSEE

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We investigated allegations that a company or its contractors may have provided false information to Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) inspectors in response to an incident of noncompliance (INC) BSEE issued for corroded grating discovered during an August 2017 inspection at an offshore production platform in the Gulf of Mexico. BSEE inspectors suspected that the corroded grating contributed to an offshore fatality in 2019. BSEE initiated a safety investigation and traveled to the platform the same day the incident was reported. During that investigation, one of the inspectors received an allegation that the corroded grating involved in the incident had been noted during a 2017 annual inspection. Another BSEE inspector later received anonymous information that claimed that the company did not make required repairs because of the associated costs.

We investigated the allegations that the company provided false information in its response to the INC in 2017.¹ We did not find evidence substantiating this claim. BSEE provided us with the company's verification of its repairs related to BSEE's 2017 annual inspection and the associated INC, and we were able to subsequently confirm that work had been performed on the well bay grating in the area. However, although we obtained and reviewed company documentation and interviewed witnesses, we could not corroborate that the corroded grating BSEE identified during its 2017 inspection was the same grating involved in the 2019 fatal incident. BSEE's description of the violation documented in the August 2017 INC included only general language that did not clearly refer to a specific location, and the photographs taken during the inspection similarly lacked reference points that would help to identify the location of the grating.

We also found that BSEE did not complete a follow-up inspection to confirm and document the grating repairs or condition. We were unable to determine why such a follow-up inspection did not occur.

This is a summary of a report we provided to the BSEE Director for any action deemed appropriate.

¹ We did not investigate the incident itself because BSEE has statutory responsibility for such investigations based on the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.

