OESI Activities and Plans for the First 200 Days

On November 7, 2013, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), Department of Interior announced that the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station’s (TEES) Mary Kay O’Connor Process Safety Center had been selected to manage the Ocean Energy Safety Institute (OESI). The mission of the OESI is provide a forum for dialogue, shared learning and cooperative research among academia, government, industry and other non-government organizations in offshore-related technologies and activities that help ensure environmentally safe and responsible offshore operations. OESI represents a cooperative agreement partnership between BSEE, Texas A&M University, University of Texas and University of Houston.

OESI stems from a recommendation from the Ocean Energy Safety Advisory Committee, a federal advisory group comprised of representatives from industry, federal government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the academic community. OESI is an important source of unbiased, independent information and will not have any regulatory authority over the offshore industry. OESI is a collaborative venture that will also include involvement on science and technology issues from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

OESI will promote collaboration among Federal agencies, industry, standards organizations, and academia in order to provide technical assistance to BSEE, BOEM, and the industry in areas related to emerging technologies, the best available and safest technologies (BAST), and the identification of gaps in safety research. In addition, it will assist in the development of databases to measure and assess the reliability of safety systems and train Federal employees to enable them to remain current on state-of-the-art technology. Information on issues related to offshore safety and best practices will be shared with industry, government, and the public through OESI held forums.

Since the November 2013 announcement the partner universities in consultation with BSEE have developed strategies to establish the various programs. This newsletter provides a description of the planned activities and the schedule for the next 200 days. As envisioned, each of the OESI activities will involve intensive collaboration and interaction with the stakeholders. A summary of the planned activities for the first 200 days is given below:

1. An item of highest interest and significance is the hiring of a full-time OESI Director of Operations. Currently, a nation-wide search is being conducted and applications are currently being accepted by the Mary Kay O’Connor Process Safety Center through the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) employment website. More information on the position and responsibilities can be found in this newsletter. Interested candidates are encouraged to complete applications as soon as possible.

2. Another important topic is the development of outreach and relationship building opportunities among OESI, industry, academia, and governmental agencies other than BSEE and BOEM. To address this, OESI will host a series of forums in 2014, covering topics such as risk, research, failure data reporting, best available and safest technologies, and human factors related to risk. More information on the forums will be announced as details become available.
a. On May 12-13, 2014, a two-day forum will be organized in Houston, entitled: “Risk Awareness, Risk Perception and Using the Awareness and Perception in Making Operational Decisions on a Continuing basis in oil and gas operations.” The objective of this forum is to promote dialogue and shared learning among academia, government, industry, and other non-governmental organizations on topics like risk informed decision making, quantitative risk assessment (QRA) methodology, case histories of decision making, risk informed decision making on design phase vs. day-to-day basis, failure rate and other data needs, and how risk assessment can best be used in performance based regulations to improve safety culture on the OCS.

b. On June 19, 2014, a one-day forum entitled: “Increased Sustainability through Reliability Data Collection and Analysis” will be held. Similar to the risk forum, the objective of this forum is to promote industry-wide data exchange opportunities. The dialogue and shared learning among academia, government, industry, and other non-governmental organizations on topics like data gaps, responsibility for data collection and analysis, voluntary vs. regulatory approach, breakdown barriers of data exchange, and incentives from BSEE and other organizations. Dedicated session on the voluntary near miss reporting system will also take place which represents an additional managerial tool to improve the safety culture on the OCS.

c. On August 12-13, 2014, experts in offshore energy-related technologies and activities will be invited to discuss and develop a “Roadmap for the Ocean Energy Safety Research.” Research related to offshore oil and gas exploration, development, and production technology, including technology specific to deepwater and artic exploration and development, that is being performed by industry, academia, and governments throughout the world will be discussed in order to identify key technological and regulatory gaps in that research.

d. Finally, two additional forums will be organized in the Fall of 2014, one forum to focus on the Best Available and Safest Technologies (BAST) and another highlighting the role of human factors in ocean energy safety. More information on all these forums will be announced as details become available.