

BSEE: Hazards associated with cranes on idle facilities

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The United States Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) has published [Safety Alert #448](#) relating to hazards associated with cranes on idle facilities posing safety and environmental risks.



Figure 1 – Corroded crane cable



Figure 2 – Crane missing main block and auxiliary ball

What happened?

BSEE inspectors have observed multiple crane components in poor condition on idle facilities throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, BSEE inspectors have noted various crane components missing that were previously attached by crane cables.

After extended periods of inactivity, with little or no operator inspection and maintenance, lifting equipment deteriorates due to harsh offshore environmental conditions. BSEE inspectors have observed corrosion on numerous crane cables, which support main blocks, auxiliary balls, overhaul/headache hook balls, and anti-two block equipment. Without proper oversight, the weakened cables have parted, resulting in cables and associated crane components dropping from elevation.

In addition, diminished integrity of wire rope and synthetic slings exposed to weather elements have also been identified as dropped object hazards. These slings are sometimes used to support heavy water hoses and diesel fuel hoses. If the slings fail, there is a potential for severe consequences. The dropped objects can potentially pose a safety risk to personnel boarding the facility or individuals nearby the facility, such as offshore support vessel crewmembers or commercial/recreational fishermen. The dropped objects can also become marine debris, posing environmental risks.

Along with dropped object hazards, potential pollution threats associated with inactive cranes on idle facilities have been identified by BSEE inspectors. Defective fittings, hoses, and leaking diesel/hydraulic reservoirs have been observed across multiple idle platforms.

As most inactive cranes on idle structures have been taken permanently out of service, they no longer require an annual inspection by a qualified inspector. Consequently, in most cases preventative or corrective maintenance has been disregarded.

BSEE recommendations

- Removing all blocks and balls from inactive cranes on idle facilities. If immediate removal is not possible, temporarily secure the blocks/balls with straps or slings that are in adequate condition to prevent dropped objects hazards.
- Conducting a full-function operation inspection when an out of service crane is being put back into service, paying special attention to the lubrication of the wire ropes. All slings on idle facilities that are kept on outboard brackets should be appropriately stored or discarded to eliminate the possibility of falling overboard.
- Clearing diesel and hydraulic reservoirs and associated hoses on cranes that have been permanently taken out of service, to eliminate pollution potential.

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