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ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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May 24, 2010

Mr. Lamar McKay  
President and CEO,  
BP America, Inc.  
501 Westlake Park Boulevard  
Houston, Texas, 70779

Dear Mr. McKay:

As the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico continues into its second month, all eyes are on the broken and gushing riser pipe 5000 feet below the ocean floor. Just last week, in response to my request, you agreed to grant the public access to the live video feed from the accident site. The entire world is now able to see for itself a limited view of the oil flowing into the ocean waters, as well as efforts by BP to contain the spill. That is a critical step forward in providing the transparency necessary for the public and for outside experts to be able to judge the size and extent of the spill, and to consider and evaluate options for halting the flow of toxic oil and oil dispersant mixes into the environment. It will also be important to subsequent efforts to assess the full extent of natural resource damages resulting from the BP spill.

I appreciate your decision to allow the public to view this feed, and as you know, there has been an overwhelming response to the availability of this information. The websites for the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming and the Energy and Commerce Committee have received hundreds of thousands of visitors seeking to watch this feed. Due to the incredible response, BP decided put the live feed on its own website and provided access to news organizations. I commend your efforts to provide this information to the public.

However, I have received thousands of comments from citizens across the nation regarding this footage, and feel it is important to make you aware of those comments, including:

**Multiple Screens:** BP currently has the ability to view several video images from the ocean floor at one time, using as many as 12 cameras at one time. While BP has made these images available to members of Congress, there is still only one video feed available to the public and news media.

**Date and Time Information** Previous footage included date and time stamp information. The current live feed does not contain such information.

**Archiving of Footage:** Several scientists and students from Universities have informed the Select Committee that archiving the video could help others devise better response efforts and develop new engineering technology to be used on the ocean floor in the future.

I would like to ask that you make immediately available, in real time, feed from all of the cameras that are currently operating at the accident site, and that you retain all available footage. BP has the capacity to provide live streams from several different camera sites operating underwater at the accident site. Although not all such cameras are operating simultaneously, BP can stream live feed from all video sites that are in operation at any given time.

As an example of the importance of this information, our initial view of the live feed from all cameras revealed at least two cameras showing 2 leaks at different points of the riser pipe. Although much of the live feed has shown the oil flowing from what appears to be the larger of the two leaks, to our knowledge the live feed has not allowed the public to view the smaller of the two leaks. In addition, BP now appears to be showing on live feed some critical rover activities, which are presumably being conducted in preparation for the upcoming "top kill" effort. If all cameras were streaming live feed, we would be able to obtain a more complete picture of the situation. If there is footage being shot from any camera, we would ask that you make it available to news media and the public.

I want to emphasize that I do not want to affect operations of the spill response team in any way by seeking this information for the public. It is of supreme importance that BP immediately take whatever actions are necessary to stop the flow of oil and kill the well. I would not want BP to redirect cameras or to affect in any way the quality or integrity of the live video feed to operators or others within the response team.

I do, however, ask that you make available all live video feed from all cameras that are operational at any given time and see no reason why, at this point in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that such information cannot be made available without any impact on operations. This information will be helpful to the public and to outside experts attempting to assess the situation and to devise solutions to the problem. In particular, this information will be necessary for purposes of transparency, as BP conducts its "top kill" operation and other operations designed to stop the flow of oil.

Although the spill is BP's, the ocean into which it is flowing, and the coastlines and subsea environments that it is destroying belong to the American people. It is incumbent upon BP to at least provide the American public with a complete and accurate picture of the situation as it unfolds.

Because of the overwhelming interest in viewing this information, especially as BP heads into this week's "Top Kill" activity, I strongly suggest that you make the video feeds available in easy to access, multiple formats that will make it easier for the public to access, share and comment on.

Finally, I want to request that you archive and not destroy all available video footage shot since the time of the accident. This footage will be a critical record of the event and will be useful to the Independent Blue Ribbon Commission created by President Obama. I would request that you make such footage publicly available as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and  
Environment  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Committee

CC: Honorable Henry Waxman, Chairman  
Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member  
Honorable Fred Upton, Ranking Member