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energycommerce.house.gov

June 24, 2010

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

Dear Mr. McKay:

At approximately 8:45 a.m. Eastern time on June 23, 2010, BP's efforts to collect oil from the Lower Marine Riser Package (LMRP) cap on the damaged Macondo well were disrupted and BP was forced to remove the cap. As we understand the situation, one of the seawater vents on the cap was inadvertently closed, reportedly due to an ROV bumping the vent. This reportedly caused formation of ice crystals, and gas and liquids then rose through the vent. BP decided to immediately disconnect the collection system, remove the cap and check for ice crystals. Throughout the day, oil flowed unimpeded from the top of the severed LMRP until BP replaced the cap that evening.

The end result of this mishap is that thousands more barrels of oil flowed into the sea during the duration of the event. We cannot afford such errors, and we need to understand clearly the facts behind it. We also need to better understand BP's plans for coping with such a contingency and for moving as quickly as possible to completely shut off the flow from the well. In addition, we need to know what are the limiting factors relating to such steps that may require or add to any delay in moving forward immediately.

In order to be better able to judge for ourselves the situation, please answer the following questions:

- 1) What was the cause of the vent closing? Was it bumped by an ROV? If so, please provide video footage of the bumping incident. If high-definition footage is available, please provide the video in that format.

Mr. Lamar McKay

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- 2) What safety protections are provided with regard to the collection system? Is it possible for gas to rise through the collection system and create another explosion? What systems, if any, prevent such a possibility?
- 3) In terms of oil collection, is the cap, after being replaced, functioning as well as it previously did? Is it performing better? Or did the incident cause the performance of the cap to worsen?
- 4) When will the next cap be put in place and what is its current state of readiness? What are the factors that prevent placement of the new cap immediately? Is the cap already fabricated and in transit or onsite? Are there additional components of the collection system that require fabrication or transport to the site? Or is placement of the cap being delayed solely due to the lack of sufficient surface handling capacity?
- 5) What safety measures devices will be installed on this new cap to prevent accidents, explosions or damage to the well bore?
- 6) Please summarize the factors that could impact the timing or success of the new cap including, but not limited to, the need for fabrication of devices or new tools, arrival of supplies, arrival of processing, handling and storage capacity, and the need for any additional equipment or materials.
- 7) Please provide copies of all documents in your possession created since April 20, 2010 that relate to plans for efforts to place caps or oil collection systems on the well. Please provide copies of all such documents that are in your personal possession by close of business on Tuesday June 29th. Please provide copies of all such documents in the possession of, or addressed to, Mr. Tony Hayward, Mr. Doug Suttles, Mr. Bob Dudley and Mr. Kent Wells within one week of receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
Chairman

Energy and Environment Subcommittee
Energy and Commerce Committee

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