



Watch out for open manholes and displaced deck gratings

Open manholes and displaced gratings pose considerable hazards to crew on offshore installations as evidenced by two recent incidents reported by the US Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

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Background

The first incident involved a night-time production operator on a fixed facility who was found to be missing from the platform during morning rounds. The personnel onboard noticed a section of grating displaced in the upright position with the missing person's hardhat and clipboard next to the grating. It is thought that prior to the incident the deck area was taped off with red "DANGER" tape but was not hard barricaded to prevent a flow of personnel.

In the second incident a crew member had completed work on a well which was properly barricaded. At nighttime two employees went to replace the well access hatch cover over the well on the drill deck. It appears that each of the two employees inadvertently picked up the wrong hatch cover (identified in the second photograph below with a red arrow). Each employee grabbed one handle of the cover, which was the same color as the deck and had no well identifying information on it. This action unknowingly created an open hole; and as the employees moved the hatch, one of the employees stepped and fell through the hole to the deck below.



Warning and recommendations

In a [BSEE Gratings Jul2019.pdf](#) of 4 June 2019 the US Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) has issued a warning to all offshore operators and contractors to inspect their facilities and communicate the associated hazards to all personnel.

Additionally, the BSEE recommends that operators consider the following:

- Review the Safety Alert with crew and discuss any hazardous areas and encourage feedback from those present to ensure the issues are fully understood.
- Conduct a review on the integrity of decks, gratings, and structural and support beams on their facility. If the inspection identifies an area of marginal or suspect strength, it must be clearly marked, appropriate mitigation actions taken, and employees be informed of these zones.
- Conduct a review of the facility to identify any open holes or surfaces that cannot support personnel and, if such an area or open hole is identified, ensure that it is properly barricaded and/or covered.
- Conduct a review of their facility to make sure that all grating and flooring sections are securely fastened to the underlying structural members. Access should be prevented to areas where the grating and flooring sections are not securely fastened to the underlying structural members or barricaded as described below.
- To prevent the flow of personnel into hazardous areas, all barricades should:
 - have a top rail and middle rail;
 - be in compliance with the Regulatory height and load requirements.
- If an open hole is found that cannot be immediately barricaded as described above, post an Open Hole Attendant / Hole Watch, with no other duties – and ensure that the person is equipped with adequate fall protection at all times.
- Management and facility supervisors should ensure the workspace organization, proper labeling of equipment and the conduct of operations are fully and constantly reviewed for safety hazards before and during operations.
- Operators should ensure that all personnel wear fall protection when necessary and that a secure connection for the fall protection is provided and used.
- Personnel must confirm that job safety analyses comply with the approved procedures and address the hazards specific to the job. The task should be supervised to ensure an orderly completion of job steps.

Conclusion

Members and clients operating offshore facilities are advised to follow the recommendations and safety warning issued by the BSEE and keep their facility in a clean and orderly condition to reduce the chance of injury through slips, trips and falls.

Other relevant sources of information:

- Loss Prevention Poster: [Look where you step](#)

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