

BP and the Government's Record of Failure in Capping the Oil Well

Relief Wells Delayed. New Tests Show "Gap" in Oil "Well Column"

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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An oil and gas industry veteran with 30 years experience who goes by the alias Fishgrease gave a pretty good [recap](#) of BP and the government's record of failure in capping the oil well:

1. BP does a superhuman job of creating conditions favorable to loss of control of what is very possibly the largest well in the history of the Gulf of Mexico. Result: Blowout. FAIL
1. For more than a day, BP insists there is no leakage. Result: Wrong. FAIL
1. BP admits that well is leaking. Says leak is 1000 BOPD. Result: Wrong. FAIL
1. NOAA, USCG and independent groups say the leak sure looks more like 5000 BOPD. BP says... DEAL! It's 5000 BOPD! How silly of us! Result: Wrong. FAIL

Round about here, BP succumbs to pressure from ... Congress and other groups and begins to release video feeds of that is happening under a mile of Gulf water, at the damaged well.

1. BP builds a huge metal barn to lower over one of the leaks. Result: G@*!@^\$ thing clogs with hydrate ice within seconds. FAIL
1. BP installs Insertion Tube Technology. Result: Captures a very small and day-by-day-smaller portion of the leak. FAIL
1. BP tries Diamond Wire Saw Technology to cut the damaged riser off the top of the BOP, leaving a clean even surface to seat a cap. Result: Wire gets stuck. FAIL
1. BP tries Crunchy... a huge hydraulic Jaws-of-Death to snip the riser. Result: Jagged, bent, uneven surface upon which nothing will seal. FAIL
1. BP lowers cap #4. Steam Punk fans rejoice! Result: This cap is capturing only a minor fraction of the leak. FAIL

1. BP is ordered to increase containment capacity by the USCG. Says it will. Doesn't. Starts piping a portion of the leak to the Q4000 where it is all burned, unmeasured. Result: They're capturing or burning an estimated 50% of the leak, when they were ordered to catch it ALL. FAIL
1. BP is again ordered to increase capture capacity via sternly-worded letter. Finally installs another processing boat. Result: Still not getting much more than 50% of the leak. Makes excuse that there's not enough room in the fucking Gulf of Mexico to park another boat. FAIL
1. BP installs "Capping Stack Technology" in order to more effectively capture leak. Result: Vented riser immediately freezes off. This is the beginning of the end of capture. FAIL
1. BP comes up with "Integrity Test Technology" which completely shuts in the well to test its integrity. Result: Works... immediately starts leaking... but does stop the leak. BP keeps moving goal line for integrity downward from 9000 psi to 8000 psi to 7500 psi to whatever the hell pressure they're seeing that day....
1. ... Well remains shut in. Leaks are nominal but increasing....
1. BP comes up with "Static Kill Technology" says it can kill well....

Along about here, BP quits releasing data. Video feeds start blacking out and "Rogue ROVs" appear... we can't see the feeds of those. They're assigned to monitor the BOP leaks and anything else BP doesn't want us to see.

1. "Magic Cement Technology!" BP convinces Government to put the question of total capture and measurement out of the question. All work on containment stops cold. BP pushes a shitload of mud and cement into well. Result: Even though there's no way on God's Green Earth that they could know where the cement goes, they say they successfully cemented the casing... just the casing... not the annulus. News Media interprets this as a complete plugging of the well and questions whether the relief wells are even needed....

But the well is still leaking, now out of a very energetic leak on the bottom flange seal on the Felxjoint. There is still pressure on the BOP because you can't have leaks without pressure. Plugged wells don't LEAK!

1. BP says they're going to get some pressure readings off the BOP after venting to see if they can establish flow up the annulus... or something. No one can figure out what the hell they're talking about here and they don't elaborate beyond Thad Allen blubbering a bunch of stuff NO ONE understands.... They freeze off their chokes atop the Capping Stack by flowing hydrocarbons through them with a very large pressure drop. ALL feeds showing anything that is going on are blacked out. After promising to release data, BP and Thad Allen.... don't....

Bob Cavnar continues the timeline, [bringing us up to date](#):

Things keep getting curiouser and curiouser with the Well that Won't Die. In his presser this morning, Adm Allen announced that they are still trying to decide what to do about the relief well, the weak components on the old BOP, and how they're going to approach the relief well, which is still just sitting there, a tantilizing 3 1/2 feet from the blowout wellbore. Dithering seems a strong word, but one I'll now use. You'll recall that right after BP started the surprise "well integrity test" back in July, they announced the surprise "static kill", characterizing it as low pressure, low risk, and an effort to "stabilize" the well. They pumped that procedure on August 3rd, and, declaring the well "static", then pumped 500 barrels of cement announcing that the entire job went right down the casing and out into the formation. That was 11 days ago.

Since, BP and Adm Allen raised the [ominous possibility](#) that there was something mysterious going on in the annulus, the space between the production casing and the intermediate casing. Adm Allen has gone on and on about 1,000 barrels of oil in the annulus, "near ambient" pressure testing, rising pressure, falling pressure, holding pressure, and bleeding pressure, to the bewilderment of everyone, including me. Kent Wells, the star of the BP "Technical" McBriefing's, where no technical data is provided, and only few questions are taken (notice I didn't say answered), has been AWOL since his last appearance 6 days ago. The purpose of the "new ambient" pressure test is still unclear, but, after being hounded for over a week by the [DailyKos Gulf Watchers](#), the Admiral compelled BP to release the BOP pressure readings, but BP left out basic information like starting point, whether the well is shut in at the surface or seafloor, the fluid in the riser, etc, so the data is pretty much useless, like most other information that's been disclosed.

Today, the Admiral admitted that there were three components in the the BOP stack that is of concern; we know which ones those are, since we've been [talking about them for over a month](#). The weak components are the flex joint, right on top of the old stack, the riser adapter, and what they call the transition spool are all rated below the other components in the stack, between 5,000 psi to 6,000 psi maximum working pressure. In each of these procedures that BP has undertaken, the top kill, the well integrity test, the injectivity tests, and static kill, the pressures that BP announced actually exceeded the rated pressures of at least one of those components. After performing all of these machinations, they are now suddenly concerned about pressure on the BOP, and are actually talking about changing out the entire stack before completing the bottom kill. What?

All of this delay and dithering is confusing, at best. Pulling the stack at this point is even more concerning, especially with drill pipe and God know what all inside, including the casing hanger. Had they followed the original plan of set the capping stack, hooking up the risers that were supposed to be completed in mid-July, and producing the well to the surface while they were killing it from below, all of this new discussion would be moot. This static kill, where they [really have no idea](#) where the cement and mud went, has only complicated matters, created more uncertainty, and absolutely more delay.

In addition, Admiral Allen said today that new tests show "gap" in "well column" causing loss of pressure:

Does the government have any idea what it's doing? Does BP?

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