

# Unfolding Ecological Catastrophe: BP refuses to disclose Critical Data: BP Moves Goalpost for the Oil Well Integrity Test:

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Theme: [Environment](#)

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I [noted](#) on July 15th:

As Coast Guard admiral Thad Allen has [explained](#), sustained pressure readings above 8,000 pounds per square inch (psi) would show that the wellbore is more or less intact, while pressures of 6,000 psi or less would mean there could be major problems:

We are looking for somewhere between 8,000 and 9,000 PSI inside the capping stack, which would indicate to us that the hydrocarbons are being forced up and the wellbores are being able to withstand that pressure. And that is good news.

If we are down around in the 4,000 to 5,000, 6,000 range that could potentially tell us that the hydrocarbons are being diverted someplace else, and we would have to try and assess the implications of that. And as you might imagine, there are gradations as you go up from 4,000 or 5,000 PSI up to 8,000 or 9,000. ...

We will at some point try to get to 8,000 or 9,000 and sustain that for some period of time, and these will be done basically, as I said — if we have a very low pressure reading, we will try and need (ph) at least six hours of those readings to try to ensure that that is the reading. If it's a little higher, we want to go for 24 hours. And if it's up at 8,000 or 9,000, we would like to go 48 hours just to make sure it can sustain those pressures for that amount of time.

How was the 8,000 psi number calculated to determine the lower acceptable limit for the pressure test?

Don Van Nieuwenhuise – director of geoscience programs at the University of Houston – explained to CNN that the pressure at the bottom of the well is 11,000 psi, and so scientists have calculated that it should be 8,000 psi at the top of the well:

Yet BP is now trying to pretend that 8,000 psi was never the target.

As oil industry expert Robert Cavner [writes](#):

Kent Wells [moved the goalpost](#) during his Friday, July 16 briefing, saying,

“We also said that if the pressure go above 8,000 pounds and really the number in 7,500 pounds, it would really say to us that we do have integrity under, essentially, any scenario.”

Very smooth. In one sweeping statement, that the press let him get away with, Wells moved the target pressure down as much as 1,500 psi from the 9,000 psi to 7,500, much closer to the 6,700 psi they were holding, which is actually at the lower end of the ambiguity range [we talked about on Friday](#). Wells did it again yesterday, moving the “good integrity” range [number down to 6,000 psi to 7,500 psi](#), saying,

“But at this point there is no evidence that we have no integrity and that’s very good and the fact that the pressure is continuing to rise is giving us more and more confidence that as we go through this process.”

So, over the last 3 days, BP has walked the “integrity” goalpost down from as high as 9,000 psi to 6,000 psi, or at least the 6,700 psi, which happens to be where they are, give or take 100 psi. You know Adm Allen didn’t just make up the 8,000 to 9,000, being a sea captain and knowing little to nothing about oil and gas. Somebody gave him those numbers. BP moved to goalpost and the timeline, and the press let them get away with it. Again.

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So the stage is set. It sure looks like to me that BP is refusing to disclose critical data and playing chicken with the government while holding our Gulf of Mexico as hostage. They have every motivation to not produce the well, for all the reasons we’ve discussed before, most importantly, being able to measure the flow; and the ROV feed of oil roaring back into the Gulf is the gun to the head. The government should compel BP to release all the data from this test. Again, this well, this lease, this oil and gas belong to the United States. This well is in federal waters, and we are all owners here. As owners of this resource, we have a right to see all the information available. BP should immediately release all of the pressure buildup data, temperature data, acoustic data, and seismic data. They should also release their build up models including the Horner plot forecasts that Wells discussed yesterday. Only then can we make a judgment that BP is managing this in the best interest of the United States, not just their own. We need no more reason for this demand than the massive scale of this catastrophe.

One more thing...these McBriefings are BS, and we’re just passively sitting there letting BP get away with “technical briefings” that are neither technical or briefings. It’s time to start asking the hard questions, demanding the data, and to stop putting up with the one question per customer, no followups, no coupons accepted policy. These briefings should be live, with some reporters actually present rather than just by telephone. If the government won’t do it, then we need to. This is too important.

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