

Six years ago this week, an accident off the Louisiana coast claimed the lives of 11 brave men and set off what would become the worst marine oil spill in our country's history. Before the underwater Macondo well was finally capped three months later, millions of barrels of crude oil poured into the Gulf of Mexico.

Louisianians are keenly aware of both the benefits and risks inherent in energy production. Our state is one of America's largest oil and gas producers, thanks largely to offshore production in the Gulf. The energy industry generates billions of dollars in revenue and supports tens of thousands of jobs here.

But Louisiana also bore the brunt of the Deepwater Horizon accident and the federal response — and the risk of a similar catastrophe is unacceptable.

How can Louisiana, and the nation as a whole, tap into our vast offshore energy resources while minimizing the risk of another accident?

The oil and gas industry and federal regulators have focused on that question since 2010. The industry already has implemented numerous safety reforms over the years. And a year ago, the U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement proposed a new rule to tighten standards on offshore well blowout preventers and controls on how companies drill and monitor these wells. The oil and gas industry diligently attempted to help BSEE get the rule right, repeatedly voicing concerns about unintended consequences that could lead to less safety and less environmental protection. The final rule was recently released and many concerns have been addressed.

In the past six years, regulators and the industry have made great strides to enhance the safety of offshore operations. As the co-chairs of the national spill commission said in April 2014, "Offshore drilling is safer than it was four years ago" because industry and the government have enhanced spill prevention, containment and response, revised existing standards and regulations and created new ones, and worked hard to foster a strong industry safety culture.

The industry established the Center for Offshore Safety, which works with the regulatory community to make sure that the latest advances in safety technologies and practices are shared throughout the industry and across the country. New containment and gathering systems also stand ready to deploy at a moment's notice in the event of a future spill, and coordination among public and private entities has been vastly improved.

Oil and gas producers have accomplished great things during the past decade. Applying American innovation and technical know-how, we have achieved what seemed impossible a few years ago.

Today, the United States is the world's top



Fireboats try to extinguish the blaze on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig south of Venice after
Michael DeMocker / staff archive

oil and gas producer. This miracle is what has kept energy prices low for consumers despite political turmoil in the Middle East, Russia and elsewhere. The success of the oil and natural gas industry has been a key driver of the U.S. economic recovery, creating jobs and putting more money back in consumers' pockets.

The anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy is a reminder that despite the industry's accomplishments, we must remain vigilant and work every day to make our operations as safe as possible.

Nothing is more important to the oil and gas industry than safety. We have put sweeping new industry standards in place during the past few years, and we welcome effective regulations that support and enhance our efforts to safely and cleanly deliver the energy America needs.

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An oil-saturated brown pelican seeks refuge
zon disaster in 2010. *Matthew Hinton / staff*