

Summary: Allegations that BSEE Employees Created False Records in Database Unfounded

Report Date: July 20, 2017

OIG initiated an investigation after receiving allegations that officials at the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) directed staff members to secretly create hundreds of false database records in the Technical Information Management System (TIMS). The complainant alleged that the records were created to clear Gulf of Mexico platform operators of decommissioning and bonding obligations, which potentially exposed the public to financial risk and environmental hazards. It was also alleged that BSEE officials intended to retaliate against the complainant by using the false records as evidence of her poor performance.

Our investigation found that hundreds of new applications and site clearance dates were created in TIMS in 2015 and 2016 by BSEE employees for platforms that were decommissioned decades earlier. We did not find evidence that the records were entered in TIMS to relieve platform operators of any decommissioning or bonding obligations as alleged.

We learned that an algorithm being used in TIMS to calculate current bonding obligations had been erroneously calculating bonding obligations on platforms that had already been decommissioned but were missing site clearance dates in TIMS. To rectify this problem, BSEE managers directed staff members to enter site clearance dates on those old records in TIMS to prevent the algorithm from including platforms that had long been decommissioned and cleared. The creation of new applications in TIMS was necessary in order to enter site clearance dates on each of the old records.

We sought to obtain further details from the complainant regarding the retaliation complaint, but the complainant was unresponsive to our requests for information.

This is a summary of a report of investigation we provided to the Director of BSEE for any action deemed appropriate.

