

## **Well Containment Protocol**

Addressing the Obama's Administration's mandate to swiftly contain out-of-control wells was the topic of the recent Technical luncheon held on August 9<sup>th</sup>. The event was co-hosted by API – Delta Chapter and the Society for Petroleum Engineers - Delta Section (SPE). The key note speaker was Mr. Roger Scheuermann, Commercial Chairman of the Helix Well Containment Group (HWCG).

“The HWCG containment system is ready to be deployed when needed” said Scheuermann as he addressed a sold out crowd at the Downtown Holiday Inn in New Orleans. Listening in via teleconferencing were additional API/SPE members in Covington.

Scheuermann gave a detailed report on the processes and procedures that have been implemented since the Mancodo Well explosion in the Gulf last year.

Scheuermann explained that the HWCG is a consortium of 24 deepwater operators in the Gulf of Mexico that came together with the common goal of expanding capabilities to quickly and comprehensively respond to a subsea spill. HWCG is made up of a diverse and experienced group of deepwater operators, representing two-thirds of the deepwater operators and approximately half of all deepwater oil and natural gas production in the Gulf of Mexico.

He further said that HWCG invested in the best available technology, engineering and minds, and applied the most important lessons learned from the past, to create a comprehensive well-containment response system model- the Helix Fast Response System (HFRS) - made up of equipment, procedures and processes ready to be activated immediately in the event of a deepwater well control incident.

Scheuermann explained that the equipment component of the plan utilizes vessels with experienced crews operating full time in the Gulf of Mexico. Contracts are structured so that in the event of a spill, the required vessels can enter spill response mode immediately. HWCG has signed an agreement with Helix Energy Solutions Group to provide the primary components of the response system. HWCG has also worked with Trendsetter Engineering to develop the World's most advanced, dual barrier, 15,000 psig intervention capping stack. The two stacks create capping redundancies to 10,000 psi. Additionally, HWCG members have agreements in place with more than 35 service providers who will provide additional services, products and personnel, if needed.

Working with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, HWCG Deepwater Intervention Technical Committee (DITC) developed the HWCG Well Containment Plan, a comprehensive and detailed technical plan clearly identifying response protocols for foreseeable deepwater containment scenarios.

Scheuermann explained that the process and procedures of the plan includes the 24 HWCG members signing a Mutual Aid agreement that allows any member company to draw upon the collective technical capability and available response equipment of all members to comprehensively respond to an incident. Additionally, HWCG has entered into negotiations with PetroSkills Training Center, located in Katy, Texas to provide a joint command center that would be utilized by any member responding to a deepwater incident.

“We are committed to sharing assets and resources in the event of an incident and we are committed to being prepared” said Scheuermann. HWCG members are conducting a series of crisis exercises and drills to increase coordination and preparedness, striving for continuous improvement.

HWCG has conducted a series of day-long, comprehensive tabletop exercises and drills to simulate the implementation of the group's Well Containment Plan, ensuring increased coordination and preparedness. "More exercises are planned to continually improve the capability and knowledge of the well containment team" said Scheuermann.

"Through this consortium we will rebuild the confidence in the industry's abilities to respond to future incidents" he added.

Further information on HWCG can be obtain from their website: [www.hwcg.org](http://www.hwcg.org)