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BP: Oil Containment Operations Resume After Fire

BP Faces Another Setback In Attempt To Clean Up Gulf Coast Oil Spill

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NEW ORLEANS (AP) —



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The mobile offshore drilling unit Q4000 sits directly above the damaged Deepwater Horizon blowout preventer while crews attempt a technique known as "top kill," to try and plug the wellhead May 26, 2010, in the Gulf of Mexico.

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BP says oil containment operations have resumed in the Gulf of Mexico after a ship fire caused by a bolt of lightning had shut down the containment for about five hours.

BP spokesman Bill Salvin tells The Associated Press that containment operations resumed at 2:45 p.m. on Tuesday. He says the containment cap that had been capturing the leaking oil was not damaged by the fire and the system was shut down as a precaution.

BP had said the fire was spotted around 9:30 a.m. on a drill ship called the Discoverer Enterprise. The fire was quickly extinguished.

"At the moment, there's no capture, no containment going on, but we'll start up the Enterprise when it's safe to do so," BP spokesman Robert Wine said.

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The fire happened as President Barack Obama was in Florida as part of a two-day visit to the stricken Gulf Coast. It also came a day after the British oil giant announced that it hoped to trap as much as roughly 2.2 million gallons of oil daily by the end of June as it deploys additional containment equipment.

BP has been beefing up its containment efforts with the hurricane season in mind, building a sturdier system that can withstand the volatile weather that is so common in the Gulf in the summer months.

The Coast Guard has taken BP to task for not having enough redundancies in the system to be able to shift gears in events such as Tuesday's lightning strike.

Wine said company hopes to soon start a second containment system — a burner on a semi-submersible drilling rig that could incinerate up to 420,000 gallons of oil a day. The company had hoped to start the system as early as Tuesday.

Scientists have estimated that anywhere between about 40 million gallons to more than 100 million gallons of oil have spewed into the Gulf since a drilling rig exploded April 20, killing 11 workers. Though the latest cap installed the well has been capturing oil, large quantities are still spilling into the sea.

The company said it would use robotic submarines to survey the entire containment system, including the cap over the well, for possible damage from the fire. The fire occurred in a vent pipe leading from a tank on the Enterprise where processed oil is stored.

Louisiana has been hit with several storms and lightning strikes in the past day.

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