

## The Blue Banner's View

# CEOs involved in Gulf spill do not deserve safety bonuses

The white eyes of pelicans against ruffled, oil-slick feathers barely begin to tell the story of the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The anniversary of what Carol Browner, White House energy adviser, called the "worst U.S. environmental disaster" is approaching.

Transocean owned the Deepwater Horizon platform that exploded April 20, killing 11 oil workers and starting an oil spill that was not capped until five months later. Now they are handing out safety bonuses to their executives for their performance last year.

The spill released 5 million barrels, or 206 million gallons, of oil into the gulf. It was 20 times larger than the Exxon-Valdese oil spill in 1989.

Even though the spill has slipped away from public attention, the environmental damage is unforgettable.

As of this week, 100 whales and dolphins have washed ashore, and 35 of them were 3-foot-long stillborn or newborn calves.

Scientists estimate the number of carcasses found is usually only 2 percent of the total number of marine animals

**184,181:** Times you could drive a Toyota Prius (48 mpg highway) around the Earth at the equator using the lost oil

**69,068:** Times you could drive a Hummer H3 (18 mpg highway) around the Earth

**311:** Olympic-size swimming pools that could be filled with the oil that leaked from Deepwater Horizon

Sources: Unified Incident Command, Energy Information Association and Fueleconomy.gov

dead, which suggests the real count of dead marine mammals is closer to 5,050.

A reporter kayaking in the Gulf said he saw a group of 60 dolphins swimming through oil-slick waters with oil coming out of their blowholes.

By November, almost 7,000 dead animals had been collected, mostly birds, but also sea turtles, dolphins and other mammals.

The oil also damaged deep sea coral, threatened eight U.S. National park and contaminated the shrimp that made Louisiana cuisine famous.

The spill covered as much as 68,000 square miles of the ocean and affected 320 miles of the coast.

Satellite images still show a shiny layer of oil on the surface of the ocean.

British petroleum executives may even face manslaughter charges for the 11 killed in the explosion.

But Transocean hands out bonuses for their safety.

While Transocean recognized the "tragic loss of life," they still awarded two-thirds of a possible safety bonus to the senior managers.

They said besides the Deepwater Horizon explosion, the company's safety record was "exemplary," and "the best year in safety performance in our company's history."

We cannot simply leave out one of the largest oil spills in U.S. history

when we assess the safety of the company partially responsible.

The bonuses devalue the lives of the workers killed and injured and belittle their grieving families.

Transocean forgets the 400 species of animals now threatened by the spill, simply because they are unlucky enough to call the Gulf home.

They underestimate the importance of fishing to the Gulf community. Many come from generations of fishermen and rely on tourism to support themselves and their families.

It's an insult.

Transocean should have held off on the bonuses, even just as a PR move. We're tired of corporate America thriving while the rest of us feel the burn of the poor economy.

A USA Today analysis of data from GovernanceMetrics International showed that CEO pay rose 27 percent overall in 2010, while average workers only increased 2 percent.

The CEOs made decisions prioritizing cost instead of safety, and now they're getting bonuses. The lowly workers just keep toiling, unrewarded.

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The Blue Banner is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be e-mailed to the editor-in-chief or the appropriate section editor.

Letters should include the writer's name, year in school, and major or other relationship to UNCA. Include a telephone number to aid in verification. All articles are subject to editing.