

PUBLICATION

OSHA Still Interested in Oil and Gas Industry

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One of the biggest fines paid in the history of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) came from the oil and gas industry. In total, BP was fined approximately \$150.6 million dollars by OSHA from 2009-2012.

In a recent article published in the Daily Labor Report, David Michaels, Assistant Secretary for OSHA, reflected on the substantial resources that had been expended by OSHA to ensure worker safety in the oil and gas industry. In what may be an indicator of continued future heavy enforcement by OSHA of the industry, Michaels stated, "it's worth noting that industry continues to have a very high fatality rate. So we're very much focused on working with the industry to reduce that rate." (06 DLR A-6, 1/10/13). While it may appear that this is a cooperative approach, it has been recognized by many people who work with the agency that partnerships and alliances have been disfavored during Michaels' term and that enforcement activities have been the focus. Certainly, when considering the monumental fines assessed against BP, it remains clear that enforcement can mean very big fines from OSHA. Although the Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, recently resigned from her post, it is unclear what the future is for Michaels, but whatever the future may hold, paying attention to OSHA regulation and enforcement in the industry should be a focus for everyone.