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Green Antilles is a weblog about green topics in the Caribbean region says Caribbean Coral Reefs Mostly Dead Uncategorized Historic fisheries are about

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Caribbean must step up oil spill emergencies

Jennifer Dlouhy reports for [Fuel Fix](#) on the Caribbean oil spill response forum, held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad on 13th September:

With several Caribbean countries embracing offshore oil drilling, nations in the region need to strengthen their ability to combat emergencies stemming from deep-water wells, an industry leader and former U.S. regulator said Friday.

The rks, delivered by onetime offshore energy chief Michael Bromwich and Lee Hunt, the former president of the International Association of Drilling Contractors, came one day after a summit on oil spill response in Trinidad.

The forum brought together 100 representatives from industry, the U.S., and nations around the Caribbean Sea to discuss the shared challenge of tackling an oil spill in the region.

“This is a shared sea and a shared set of problems,” Bromwich said in a conference call with reporters today. “Were there to be a spill event it would not possibly be contained to one country but would quickly spread to others.”

Bromwich noted the enthusiasm for offshore drilling in greater and greater depths around some Caribbean countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago.

“Things are moving forward quite quickly,” Bromwich said. “The reaction has to be that if that is going to happen down the road, the country and the entire region needs to be more prepared than they are now.”



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Existing International Maritime Organization meetings already provide a forum for government-to-government conversations about offshore activity, but the conference brought industry into the dialogue.

Bromwich said the conversation among Caribbean oil regulators needs to continue. “They need to speak with each other more frequently,” he said, “and begin to figure out ways to work with each other to build up a more . . . robust capacity.”

The region could borrow some ideas from the U.S. response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010, including the oil industry’s development of capping and containment systems for reining in runaway subsea wells.

“The lesson overall from the U.S. experience was you cannot afford to be unprepared,” said Hunt, the founder of Open Forum, which organized the conference. “Although these countries are moving forward very aggressively and eagerly with their deep-water leasing and plans, they know that they must have industry response capacity and capability well established before they actually begin to drill.”

Two companies now provide containment equipment and services for deep-water wells in the Gulf of Mexico: the Marine Well Containment Company and Helix Well Containment Group. Access to a containment system now is required before oil companies can get government approval to drill a deep-water well.

BP also has stashed its own capping stack and other equipment along the Houston Ship Channel that was engineered so it can be flown in Russian cargo planes to subsea wells around the globe.

But none of that equipment is available in the Caribbean Sea. MWCC and Helix systems are targeted solely to the Gulf. The infrastructure is different too; not every country has deep-water ports or even airports capable of serving large cargo planes.

Hunt emphasized that the region needs more than just big equipment to choke off a deep-water well. A suite of tools are needed too, he stressed, along with the expertise to deploy them.

“There’s so much more to a deep-water response than the capping stack,” Hunt said. “Capping stacks are important. They can be critical. But they’re not the only answer, and sometimes they won’t be the answer.”

Even capping stacks, such as BP’s system, that can be transported by air, still need to be deployed by seagoing vessels, Hunt noted.

“One of the conversations here at the conference was the importance of having trained, experienced . . . vessel crews working constructively in the area so they can become platforms for receiving and deploying capping stacks.”

Several Caribbean countries are moving ahead to launch offshore drilling or encourage it in deeper water.



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Oil spills kill marine creatures, contaminate coastal habitats and destroy livelihoods.

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Officials: Caribbean nations need to boost spill response powers

Posted on September 14, 2012 at 1:58 pm by Jennifer A. Dlouhy in Accidents, Industry Events, Offshore, Oil

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Dan Smallwood, COO of the Marine Well Containment Company, shows off the company's capping stack on April 15, 2011 in Houston. (Eric Kayne/For the Houston Chronicle)

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In September, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago reported a strong showing with a dozen bids for five deep-water tracts. And last year, Shell confirmed it had discovered oil in a deep-water tract off the coast of French Guiana.

Still others — particularly those countries with strong tourism economies — are more skittish.

Hunt noted that Belize has an “on again off again” relationship with offshore drilling. And in the Bahamas, voters will decide whether drilling is allowed offshore during a referendum next spring.

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Tags: Bahamas, Belize, capping stack, Caribbean, Caribbean sea, containment system, Helix Well Containment, Lee Hunt, Marine Well Containment Corporation, Michael Bromwich, offshore drilling, Tobago, Trinidad

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Jennifer A. Dlouhy

Jennifer A. Dlouhy covers energy policy and other issues for The Houston Chronicle and other Hearst Newspapers from Washington, D.C. Previously, she reported on legal affairs for Congressional Quarterly. She also has worked at The Beaumont Enterprise, The San Antonio Express-News and other newspapers. Jennifer enjoys cooking, gardening and hiking. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and infant son.