

Ex-Halliburton Manager Charged In Gulf Spill Probe

Michael Kunzelman, Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A former [Halliburton](#) [1] manager was charged Thursday with destroying evidence following BP's 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, a case that coincides with a guilty plea to a related charge by the Houston-based oilfield services company.

Anthony Badalamenti, who had been the cementing technology director for Halliburton Energy Services Inc., was charged in federal court with instructing two other employees to delete data during a post-spill review of the cement job on BP's blown-out well.

Halliburton was BP PLC's cement contractor on the drilling rig that exploded in the Gulf in April 2010, killing 11 workers and triggering the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history.

Badalamenti, 61, is charged in a bill of information, which typically signals that a defendant is cooperating with prosecutors. His attorney, Tai H. Park, declined to comment. Badalamenti is scheduled to be arraigned on Sept. 30.

Also on Thursday, a federal judge accepted a plea agreement that calls for Halliburton to pay a \$200,000 fine for a misdemeanor stemming from Badalamenti's alleged conduct.

U.S. District Judge Jane Triche Milazzo said she believes the plea agreement is reasonable and agreed with prosecutors and the company that it "adequately reflects the seriousness of the offense."

Attorney General Eric Holder said in a statement that Halliburton's guilty plea and the charge against Badalamenti "mark the latest steps forward in the Justice Department's efforts to achieve justice on behalf of all those affected by the Deepwater Horizon explosion, oil spill, and environmental disaster."

The plea deal has its critics, however. Allison Fisher, an outreach director for the Public Citizen nonprofit advocacy group, called it a "travesty."

"Rather than rubber stamp the plea agreement," she said in a statement, "the court should have rejected the bargain-basement deal because it fails to hold the corporation accountable for its criminal acts and will not deter future corporate crime."

Unlike BP and rig owner Transocean Ltd., Halliburton was not charged with a crime related to the causes of the disaster. The fine Halliburton agreed to pay is the

Ex-Halliburton Manager Charged In Gulf Spill Probe

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

statutory maximum for the misdemeanor charge of unauthorized destruction of evidence.

The deal announced in July also calls for Halliburton to be on probation for three years and to make a \$55 million contribution to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, but that payment was not a condition of the deal.

The company said in a statement that closing the case was a good move for the company and that prosecutors have described its cooperation in the case as "exceptional," as well as "forthright, extensive and ongoing since the outset of the investigation."

Marc Mukasey, a lawyer who represented Halliburton at Thursday's hearing, said the company wouldn't comment on the charge against Badalamenti.

Although Halliburton's plea deal resolves the criminal case, the company still faces hefty civil penalties for its role in the disaster.

A federal judge is presiding over a trial designed to identify the causes of BP's well blowout and assign percentages of fault to BP and its contractors. The second phase of the trial — focusing on BP's efforts to plug the well and determining how much oil spilled into the Gulf — is scheduled to start on Sept. 30.

BP resolved a Justice Department criminal probe of its role in the Deepwater Horizon disaster when it pleaded guilty in January to manslaughter charges for the deaths of the rig workers and agreed to pay a record \$4 billion in penalties. Transocean pleaded guilty in February to a misdemeanor charge of violating the Clean Water Act and agreed to pay \$400 million in criminal penalties.

Prosecutors said that in May 2010, Badalamenti directed a senior program manager to run computer simulations on centralizers, which are used to keep the casing centered in the wellbore. The results indicated there was little difference between using six or 21 centralizers. The data could have supported BP's decision to use the lower number.

Badalamenti is accused of instructing the program manager to delete the results. The program manager "felt uncomfortable" about the instruction but complied, according to prosecutors.

A different Halliburton employee also deleted data from a separate round of simulations at the direction of Badalamenti, who was acting without the authorization of the company, prosecutors said.

Halliburton notified investigators from a Justice Department task force about the deletion of data. Efforts to recover the data weren't successful.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/25/2015 - 6:12pm):

Ex-Halliburton Manager Charged In Gulf Spill Probe

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2013/09/ex-halliburton-manager-charged-gulf-spill-probe>

Links:

[1] <http://www.impomag.com/news/2013/04/haliburton-seeking-settlement-over-gulf-oil-spill>