

GULF OIL SPILL



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coast of Louisiana.

Because of the April 20, 2010, explosion and fire on the Deepwater Horizon, an oil rig owned by Swiss-based Transocean Ltd., leased to UK-based BP PLC, a lawsuit was filed by **Lanier Law Firm**. According to the lawsuit, BP PLC, Transocean Ltd, Cameron International Corporation and Halliburton Energy Services, violated the Oil Pollution Act and were negligent in failing to properly operate, inspect, and maintain the Deepwater Horizon rig. The Gulf of Mexico's fragile ecosystem was severely damaged due to the defendant's inadequate response to the explosion and then oil leak. Initially, 1,000 barrels per day were reported to be leaking by the companies; however, a US inspector suggested 100,000 barrels of oil per day is leaking off the

This catastrophic oil spill, has the potential to reach the Bahamas, than what? With its constant flow now of about 210,000 gallons of crude oil per day, it is expected to reach as far as Florida. Grand Bahama is right across from Florida, so we must ask.

- (1) What is the Government of the Bahamas doing, other than waiting for the oil to wash up on our shores?
- (2) Do we have an international environmental law agency?
- (3) Do we belong to an international environmental investigation body?
- (4) Do we have an agency/department that's ready and capable of dealing with an oil spill of this magnitude?
- (5) Who will assess and put a price on the possible damage to our already fragile ecosystem?
- (6) Who will be able to tell the Bahamian people, the lasting affect this would have on our fishing industry?
- (7) Do we have a stop and contain plan?
- (8) Who will pay for the cleanup?

For residents in the Bahamas, high levels of exposure to oil, is a serious health risk that will prove to have long term effects. According to a study that examined the relationship between the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the prevalence of generalized anxiety disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, eye irritations and respiratory symptoms, we are vulnerable to these symptoms because of our communities close proximity to the ocean. We live on Islands. Therefore; we have no where to run from the oil exposure.

(9) When we are experiencing effects or health problems, have a medical concern or question, who do we consult?

(10) What is the name of the doctor in the Bahamas who is our oil qualified health professional?

We all know what is going on with VOPAC on Grand Bahama.

(11) Does the Bahamas have a relationship with a law firm anywhere, with the expertise to deal with matters such as this?

In the United States, they are already looking into the possible Economic Impact the Gulf oil spill could have on the fish, shrimp, oysters, crab and crawfish industry.

We need to hear from the Minister responsible for Fisheries and Wildlife.

(12) If the slick can not be contained, what will be the effect on our seafood industry? What will be the economic effect and who will compensate the Bahamians for their loss of income?

(13) Right now in the Bahamas, the fishing industry contributes on average about 2.5% to the gross domestic product (GDP) with over 9,000 individuals employed in the sector 95% in fisheries.

The Government of the Bahamas can not sit back and wait, because we are threatened by the oil spill. Therefore, we need to know now what, if any, are their contingency plans.

We need to hear more from the Minister of Environment, because this could potentially be the worst man made disaster to hit the Bahamas. If the oil reaches the Bahamian beaches, I don't need an analyst to tell me how many millions we will lose from tourism.

According to the United States Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, "this thing could keep going on for 90 days." This means that, the immense damages that continue to take place in the Gulf will not end anytime soon.

(14) Who in the FNM Government; if any, is talking with the Senators/Governors of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, British Petroleum officials, states and federal officials on how to deal with this matter?

I hope and I pray, if only in the face of this catastrophe and immense danger to the Bahamas, the FNM Government will make us proud. Show us they are capable of representing the Bahamian people. Please, show some leadership. If you can remember the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, than you should know that it is impossible to get all of the oil that was spilled in to the Ocean out of it.

So, it's not a matter of if, rather, a matter of when, will the oil reach the Bahamas. With this fact on the table, no matter how long the oil takes to get here, we must get/insist on a commitment from BP PLC Transocean Ltd, Cameron International Corporation and Halliburton Energy Services. The commitment must cover 100% cleanup, cleanup costs, compensation for loss of revenue from our commercial and recreational fishing, compensation for the damage to our tourism industry, compensation for the replacement of trees, sand, rock, and wildlife and compensation for the evacuation of residents living along our coastal line.

Yes, we are a small nation; however we once were a powerful, small nation.

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