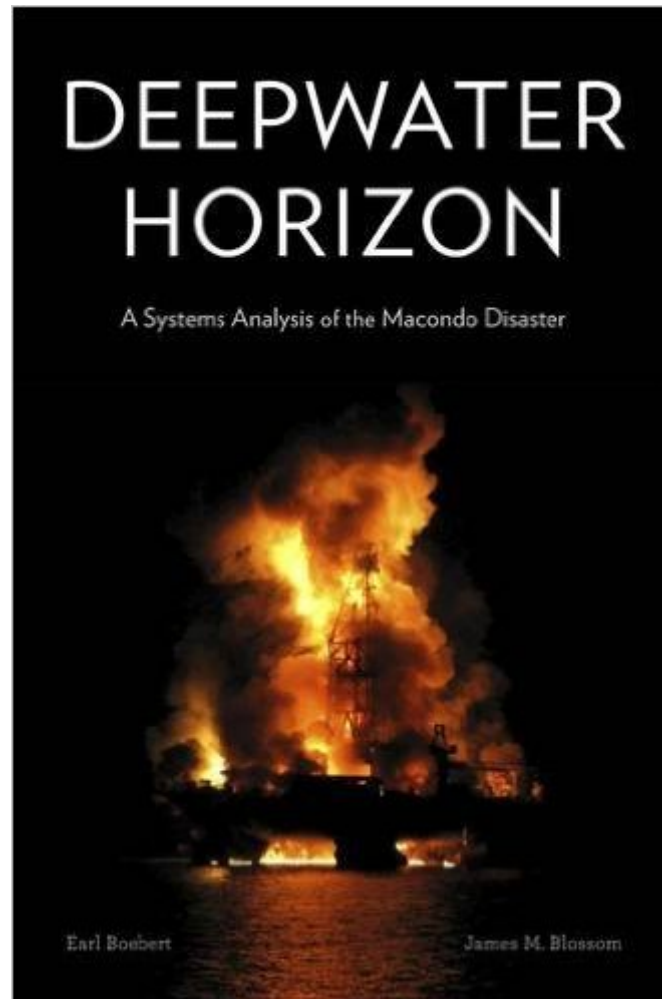# Deepwater Horizon: A Systems Analysis Of The Macondo Disaster

Synopsis

On April 20, 2010, the crew of the floating drill rig Deepwater Horizon lost control of the Macondo oil well forty miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. Escaping gas and oil ignited, destroying the rig, killing eleven crew members, and injuring dozens more. The emergency spiraled into the worst human-made economic and ecological disaster in Gulf Coast history.Senior systems engineers Earl Boebert and James Blossom offer the most comprehensive account to date of BPâ ™s Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Sifting through a mountain of evidence generated by the largest civil trial in U.S. history, the authors challenge the commonly accepted explanation that the crew, operating under pressure to cut costs, made mistakes that were compounded by the failure of a key safety device. This explanation arose from legal, political, and public relations maneuvering over the billions of dollars in damages that were ultimately paid to compensate individuals and local businesses and repair the environment. But as this book makes clear, the blowout emerged from corporate and engineering decisions which, while individually innocuous, combined to create the disaster.Rather than focusing on blame, Boebert and Blossom use the complex interactions of technology, people, and procedures involved in the high-consequence enterprise of offshore drilling to illustrate a systems approach which contributes to a better understanding of how similar disasters emerge and how they can be prevented.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (September 6, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674545230

ISBN-13: 978-0674545236

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #395,358 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #39 inÂ Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Energy Production & Extraction > Drilling Procedures   #74 inÂ Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Energy Production & Extraction > Fossil Fuels > Petroleum   #87 inÂ Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Environmental > Pollution

Customer Reviews

Confronted with the snarl of conflicting, contradictory and missing information that is the Deepwater Horizon, Boebert and Blossom wade in with sieves and scales, and after much sorting and weighing, make as much sense of it as anyone is ever likely to.As you read Deepwater Horizon, many accounts written as the disaster was unfolding or in its immediate aftermath suddenly snap into focus, their implications finally clear. 'My God,' you find yourself saying again and again, 'so that is what that was all about.'Boebert and Blossom lay out their terms in an introductory chapter. They are going to discuss the Deepwater Horizon as a "system," they say, a system so complex that no one individual or entity truly understood it. They will not be looking for a root cause of the disaster. Rather, they say, the blowout was a result of a combination of decisions, actions and component attributes rather than the result of a single act or failure.Moreover, they are going to be taking a "scholarly" rather than a "judicial" approach to the evidence, since their goal is to understand, rather than to place blame. For this reason, none of the actors is named, even when they are as easily identifiable as the chief executive of British Petroleum at the time of the disaster.Remarkably--given these and other narrative (or anti-narrative) decisions--Deepwater Horizon is an engaging and ultimately gripping read, at first illuminating and then impossible to put it down, even if you do have to go to work the next day.To me one of the most fascinating elements of this story is how little information the crew on the rig actually had about what was happening more than a mile beneath them at the bottom of a hole in the ocean floor.

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