

# Gulf oil spill panel to look at root causes

July 9 2010, By SETH BORENSTEIN , AP Science Writer

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(AP) -- The new presidential oil spill commission will focus on how safety, government oversight and the ability to clean up spills haven't kept up with advances in drilling technology, the panel's leaders say.

The commission will also dig into what it calls the root causes of the April 20 BP oil rig explosion in the [Gulf of Mexico](#), looking deeper than just equipment failures.

"Why were some of the decisions made with respect to both regulation and to immediate response?" asked panel co-chairman William Reilly. "They look irregular to the casual observer."

Former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, panel co-chairman, also said in a Friday teleconference that the panel will focus mostly on how things can be improved for the future.

The seven members of the panel hold their first meetings Monday and Tuesday in New Orleans. They will first hear from Gulf Coast victims of the oil spill and from state officials.

"The hearing itself is to give voice to the region," Reilly said. The commissioners also plan individual visits to the Gulf states to see the results of the disaster for themselves.

Reilly, who headed the U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#) during the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, said he's already seen enough to fault the way the spill is being cleaned up.

He called current clean-up technology "primitive." He suggested the panel may learn enough about the use of oil [dispersants](#) to change the way the spill is being addressed.

**More information:** <http://www.oilspillcommission.gov/>

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