

US judge finds BP 'grossly negligent' in 2010 oil spill

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A US Coast Guard image of fire boat response crews as they battle the blazing remnants of the BP operated offshore oil rig Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico on April 21, 2010

A US judge Thursday ruled the massive 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill was due to BP's "gross negligence," potentially subjecting the oil giant to billions of dollars in additional fines.

US District Judge Carl Barbier ruled that BP is "subject to enhanced

civil penalties" after concluding that the environmental disaster was the result of the British company's "gross negligence" and "willful misconduct."

The ruling could expose BP to a reported \$18 billion in additional damages following Deepwater Horizon disaster, which resulted in 11 deaths and an 87-day oil spill.

Barbier said that BP knew the well it was drilling, known as Macondo, was particularly dangerous because of the high risk of a blowout.

The oil giant's decisions throughout the drilling process qualified as "gross negligence" because they were "an extreme departure from the care required under the circumstances or a failure to exercise even a slight care."

Barbier also ruled that Transocean, which owned the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, and oil-services company Halliburton, were both negligent for the calamity.

He said BP was 67 percent responsible for the accident, Transocean was 30 percent responsible and Halliburton three percent responsible.

Barbier's ruling is the culmination of the first phase of a New Orleans trial that took place over two months beginning in February 2013. A second phase later that year calculated the amount of oil spilled, a key component in determining damages.

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