SSDA News

Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades

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SSDA-AT Government Affairs Update

By Roy Littlefield

Efforts recently have been focused on Right to Repair as SSDA-AT continues to work on co-sponsors for the REPAIR Act (H.R.906) in the US House of Representatives. The bill now has 36 co-sponsors with other members considering joining and others vowing their support on the issue. The legislation has remained bipartisan with members on both sides of the isle voicing their support.

SSDA-AT worked with Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Edward J. Markey (D-MA) sending a letter to Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg and Deputy Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Sophie Schulman, calling on NHTSA to reverse its course after it sent a recent letter to auto manufacturers, advising them not to comply with Massachusetts' Right to Repair law. NHTSA has not responded to the letter.

SSDA-AT also voiced its disapproval of the recently announced right-to-repair pact between the Automotive Service Association, the Society of Collision Repair Specialists, and the Alliance for Automotive Innovation. While SSDA acknowledges the positive intent and certain aspects of the agreement, it believes that the current pact falls short in adequately addressing the concerns of consumers and protecting their rights. Foremost among SSDA's concerns is the absence of an enforcement mechanism and the power of law within the pact. Further, the pact undermines the ongoing efforts in Congress to pass a comprehensive bill. Other associations supporting the REPAIR Act in Congress also voiced their opposition to the pact including ACA and SEMA.

Recently, SSDA-AT attended a Congressional hearing in the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet. The hearing, "Is There a Right to Repair?," examined the current legal landscape of the right to repair and related intellectual property issues, including potential future avenues for policymaking. The hearing also discussed laws and regulations at both the federal and state level and the implications for a range of industries from automotive to software to consumer electronics. Aaron Perzanowski, Thomas W. Lacchia Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School was a panelist who spoke in favor of Right to Repair legislation. Many Congressional members were vocal about their support for Right to Repair and the need for legislation in the hearing.

Recently, SSDA-AT met with Ngozi Bell, Regional Advocate, US Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy. Bell spoke with SSDA about our top issues, and we shared our position papers. SSDA-AT will explore avenues to work with the office of advocacy on a variety of pending issues including overtime regulations, right to repair, and truck driver shortages.

Building a Successful Website

By: McKensie Curnow of Net Driven

Building your own website has become increasingly simple and inexpensive in recent years. Though easy and accessible, DIY websites do not guarantee a website that works well or leaves a lasting impression for your business and your audience.

Your website is a reflection of you and your business, so you're obviously going to want to build a strong, professional, and positive presence to attract customers. Taking the risk of building a website on your own is taking the risk of losing potential leads and damaging your business's reputation – we never get a second chance to make a first impression!

When you invest in a professional web design team, such as our team here at Net Driven, you're not only investing in the visual appearance and accessibility of your website, you also invest in expert advice, techniques, and best practices to create the best possible user experience. Spending less money and trying to do it on your own may seem like the easy way out, but let's dive into why it's important to give your business the professional auto service website design it deserves.

COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY INEXPERIENCED DESIGNERS

Poor Structure & Navigation

A website should be attractive, accessible, and easy to navigate; all in all, user-friendliness is vital. A site's content should be understandable and full of useful information without being cluttered. In today's day and age, people like quick and simple. If they can't find what they need without gaining a headache, they're going to leave your site and find a frustration-free one instead. At Net Driven, we know how to organize automotive websites in a way that makes sense for both the business owner and their potential customers.

Lack of SEO

If no one can find your website, what's the point in making the effort of creating one? Many rookie designers forget the importance of SEO, or Search Engine Optimization.

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NET DRIVEN

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As a certified Google Partner, our team highly knowledgeable of automotive SEO and works hard to make sure your site gets found.

Missing CTA

Your website is one of the most powerful marketing tools for your business.

Not only does your website have the power to bring in new customers, it also helps current customers remain loyal if they find what they're looking for with minimal frustrations.

One of the main components of a great website is a clear CTA, or call-to-action.

A CTA is what converts website visitors into customers by driving them to purchase your good or service. If your website is missing a clear CTA, you'll lose sales and customers.

At Net Driven, our team ensures that every website offers conversion-focused responsive web design.

Using Free or Low-Cost Templates

Rookie designers are likely to use a free or low-cost template for their website.

While this may seem like an easy solution, it will make your website look generic and unconnected to your brand.

Your business is unique, your website should be, too. Our designers take the time to ensure each one of our automotive websites are exclusive to the client and capture the individuality of their business. As with any service or good, you get what you pay for.

Your money buys value, which in turn, will actually build your business's bank account in the long run.

Your company's website is no exception. If you want to leave a lasting, positive impression of your brand, leave website design to the professionals.

Still not convinced?

Check out our portfolio of the finest responsive web design in the automotive industry.

For further details, visit our solutions and packages pages.

Oil, Gas Production is Used for More than Fuel

There are more than 6,000 manufactured products that depend on the production of oil and gas, a list that might surprise consumers.

The list includes nail polish, mops, refrigerator linings, shower curtains, adhesives, tennis rackets and shaving cream.

White House Floats Tougher Vehicle Economy Standards

The Biden Administration wants to raise fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles, light trucks, and heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans, according to a proposal by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The new standards, which could save Americans billions at the pump, propose average fuel consumption of 58 miles per gallon for passenger cars and light trucks by 2032 and 2.6 gallons per 100 miles for heavy-duty pickup trucks and vans by 2038.

Energy Trade Groups Urge Biden Administration to Support Domestic Energy Production with "Robust" Offshore Leasing Program, World Oil

The American Petroleum Institute and Energy Workforce & Technology Council joined with 17 energy trade groups representing all sectors of the U.S. natural gas and oil industry in calling on the Biden administration to support U.S. energy security by finalizing a robust program for federal offshore leasing. In a letter to President Biden, the energy trade groups urged the administration to finalize a program that includes the maximum number of lease sales and begin the pre-leasing work required to start holding sales in 2024. The letter follows a recent Stipulated Stay agreement that imposed baseless restrictions on an estimated 11 million acres in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, leaving the offshore energy industry in an extended period of uncertainty.

"The world needs American energy leadership, but that leadership requires supportive energy policies from Washington," the letter states. "Without the certainty and predictability provided by a robust five-year leasing program, including yearly lease sales to obtain new acres, companies may explore opportunities elsewhere. Their decisions and the resulting economic, energy, and environmental benefits will be realized elsewhere, not in the U.S."

In addition to highlighting the critical role that offshore production plays in American energy security, local economies in the Gulf coast and for conservation programs, the trades also reiterated the importance of offshore production in helping the Biden administration achieve its climate goals, citing a recent study on global oil production and emissions by ICF that found that U.S. Gulf of Mexico production has a carbon intensity 46% lower than production in other parts of the world.

"The success of emerging offshore energy segments, which are prioritized by the Biden Administration, is closely intertwined with the long-term success of the domestic offshore oil and gas sector," the letter stated. "Many companies operating in offshore energy, with roots in the oil and gas industry, are actively engaged in finding solutions, expanding, and building new energy segments like offshore wind and carbon capture and storage (CCS). However, the lack of a new offshore oil and gas leasing program introduces uncertainty that will inevitably hinder companies' ability to invest in these promising energy avenues."

Billionaire Harold Hamm Sees a Great Oil Fortune Still Untapped in US Shale, BNN

The first thing that greets visitors entering the headquarters of billionaire Harold Hamm's Continental Resources Inc. is a 9-foot-long statue of a snarling bull named Boe.

Boe — short for barrels of oil equivalent — is an apt symbol for a veteran wildcatter who's still betting big on more crude production in the US. Hamm is a shale pioneer, the first to figure out how to drill miles-long wells sideways to unleash oil from North Dakota's Bakken shale region. At the time, it was the biggest US oil find since Alaska's Prudhoe Bay in 1968.

Today, Continental, which he and his family control, is the biggest oil producer in North Dakota and Oklahoma. Continental is also drilling wells in Wyoming and in the prolific Permian Basin of West Texas and New Mexico.

"The future is bright," Hamm, 77, said during an interview with Bloomberg News this month in his Oklahoma City office. "I look at it as an industry that is exciting, a lot of adventure, has a lot of potential for making great wealth."

His optimism belies forecasts for the US shale sector, which is showing signs of reaching middle age. Experts predict output will peak by the end of this decade. The Bakken has already lost its luster, with output trailing pre-Covid levels. Even in the Permian, the world's busiest shale basin, production is expected to max out by 2030 and gradually trail off from there.

The current shale slowdown, combined with production cuts from the OPEC+ alliance, is expected to tip the world's oil market into a deficit by the end of the year. And while that's likely to support prices and please producers, it suggests the dynamism and growth in the US industry as espoused by Hamm could become a thing of the past.

Hamm quibbles with the estimates, saying the Permian may not reach its high-water mark until 2035 and will see another 25% pop in production first.

"We've certainly seen some great days in shale," he said. "But have we got a long way to go? Yeah."

He spoke before the release of his new book, "Game Changer," which goes on sale Tuesday. In it, Hamm pushes for a change in energy policy in Washington that would help boost oil and gas production. Hamm, the youngest of 13 children born to Oklahoma sharecroppers, also hopes the book will rally enthusiasm for the industry that made him wealthy. He's the world's 77th richest person, according to the Bloomberg Billion-

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Billionaire Harold Hamm Sees a Great Oil Fortune Still Untapped in US Shale, BNN

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"Part of the purpose of this book is to encourage the next barefooted country boy to imagine that he could do something equally as good," he said.

Though Continental is a major US oil producer, Hamm still proudly calls himself a wildcatter — something of a rarity in an industry that's largely become averse to risk. Continental is one of the few companies drilling in southern Oklahoma, a region not known for crude-rich shale deposits. Oil prices near $80 a barrel mean that for Hamm, it's a bet worth taking.

"It's a lot of fun," Hamm said. "There is a thrill to it. Like finding ancient wealth."

After runaway production triggered an oil-price crash about a decade ago, shale drillers have been under pressure to limit spending and return cash to shareholders. Hamm's solution: Take Continental private. That process was completed late last year.

Still, Hamm says he's proud of US producers' newfound discipline. He's even learned to appreciate OPEC — once a thorn in shale's side — for helping to balance the global oil market.

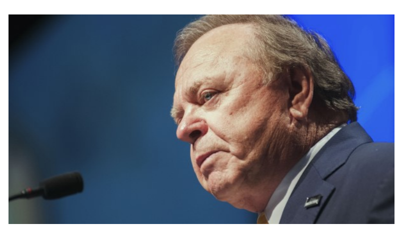
"You have a concentrated amount of production, particularly with the Saudis, and for them to act like a throttle, that's pretty good," Hamm said. "It prevents waste and oversupply and also saves some supply for increased demand without decimating the market."

Continental's production growth this year will be about 5%, Hamm said, in line with large publicly traded drillers. He expects similar growth next year.

As far as acquisitions go, Hamm is primarily looking at deals to expand in basins where Continental is already operating. But a trip with Hamm down to the basement of his 19-story office building suggests he's not ruling out going farther afield.

All over the basement lobby walls are newly installed murals depicting the four US shale basins where Continental operates. Ask if that means he won't be entering any more basins, Hamm looks at a nearby hallway with a blank, white wall and smiles. As far as he's concerned, the heyday of searching for oil in unexplored fields is far from over.

"Forty years ago, prior to shale coming about, and horizontal drilling, finding the next hidden producing field was tremendous," he said. "But does it still go on? Absolutely."



Bill Seeks Insurance Companies' Fossil Fuel Investment Disclosures, Insurance Newsnet

As more commercial insurers abandon unprofitable areas hardest hit by natural disasters – fires, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes – questions have arisen whether those same companies are making money off investments and underwriting in fossil fuel operations that may be contributing to the climate catastrophes.

"Insurers are major contributors to the climate crisis, not only by continuing to underwrite and invest in existing fossil fuels, but by supporting the expansion of fossil fuel production," said a recent statement from Public Citizen, a non-profit, progressive consumer rights advocacy group and think tank. "As they undermine consumers and their own markets, insurers are creating financial risks that could be passed from consumers and taxpayers to the rest of the economy."

The U.S. Senate Budget Committee last month launched an investigation into seven insurance giants that could highlight what Public Citizen called "this hypocrisy on a national level."

The House of Representatives has chimed in as well, with Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), and Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) on Tuesday introducing the Polluter Portfolio Disclosure Act, which would require insurance companies with more than $100 million in annual premiums to disclose their investments and underwritings related to coal, oil and gas projects, and fossil fuels. The bill would require these disclosures to be made easily accessible and searchable online.

"Insurance companies like State Farm and Allstate shouldn't be allowed to profit from the climate crisis while neglecting vulnerable communities," said Rep. Schiff. "Requiring insurers to publicly disclose their fossil fuel investments will help build transparency and empower people to make informed choices about their coverage."

In the last few months, several insurance companies, including State Farm, Allstate, AIG and others, announced major cutbacks on accepting new homeowners insurance applications in some states, primarily California and Florida. Earlier this month, AAA's insurance arm said it would not renew some "higher exposure" home insurance policies in Florida, and Farmers Insurance announced it will stop offering new home insurance policies in the state and won't renew thousands of existing ones, in part because of rising losses from hurricanes.

Fossil fuel investment by insurance industry cited

"Recent estimates show that the insurance industry had over half a trillion dollars in fossil fuel investments in 2019," said Carly Fabian, Insurance Policy Advocate at Public Citizen. "As insurers recklessly undermine their own markets, transparency on their investment and underwriting practices

Bill Seeks Insurance Companies' Fossil Fuel Investment Disclosures, Insurance Newsnet

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is crucial to monitor threats to both vulnerable communities and the financial stability of our entire economy."

David Shadburn, senior government affairs advocate at the League of Conservation Voters said insurance companies are fueling the very climate-intensified extreme weather events they are meant to be insuring against.

“Now we’re seeing some of these same companies refuse to cover some of the people most vulnerable to extreme weather events, especially low-income communities, and communities of color, even as they continue investing in fossil fuels,” he said.

Signs of cooling investment

However, there are budding signs that the insurance industry is already cooling toward fossil fuel investment and underwriting. Late last year, the alliance Insure Our Future, said 62% of reinsurance companies have plans to stop covering coal projects, while 38% were already excluding some oil and natural gas projects.

Some investors are demanding divestiture, and some insurers have determined that fossil fuel infrastructure – mines and pipelines – negatively impact other parts of their businesses.

“The call for an immediate end to insurance services for certain fossil fuel activities and producers ignores the importance of providing an effective energy transition to renewable sources,” said Nat Wienecke, senior vice president of federal government relations for the American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

"Hard exits prevent insurers from contributing what they do best – helping consumers and businesses understand physical and transition risk and operationalize their plans," he said, adding, "Hard exits may also contribute to negative, global economic impacts, as we remain in a period where traditional fossil fuels are still very much in need and a hard exit would disproportionately impact marginalized communities and developing economies."

Progressive groups and climate activists see the insurance angle as a powerful weapon against expanding fossil fuel projects. Without insurance, the energy industry would not be able attract investors for the uninsured risks, thus halting projects altogether.

“What we’re seeing is the weaponization of the business of insurance…to [try to] achieve certain public policy objectives,” David Sampson, head of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association told the Wall Street Journal earlier this month.

White House Orders Federal Agencies to Shore Up Cybersecurity, Warns of Potential Exposure, CNN

The White House ordered federal agencies to shore up their cybersecurity after agencies have lagged in implementing a key executive order President Joe Biden issued in 2021, according to a memo first obtained by CNN.

Multiple federal departments and agencies have, as of the end of June, "failed to fully comply" with critical security practices prescribed by the executive order, "leaving the U.S. Government exposed to malicious cyber intrusions and undermining the example the Government must set for adequate cybersecurity practices," national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a memo to Cabinet secretaries.

Sullivan asked senior officials from across the departments to ensure they achieve "full compliance" with the executive order's security requirements by the end of the year. His memo is addressed to agencies outside of the Pentagon.

"This morning the National Security Advisor shared a memo with federal departments and agencies to ensure their cyber infrastructure is compliant with the President's Executive Order to improve the nation's cybersecurity," a National Security Council spokesperson told CNN. "As we've said, the Biden-Harris Administration has had a relentless focus on strengthening the cybersecurity of nation's most critical sectors since day one, and will continue to work to secure our cyber defenses."

Sullivan's memo reflects frustration among senior US officials that the government hasn't gone far enough in protecting itself from a barrage of state-backed and cybercriminal attacks.

Biden's first months in office were shaped by multiple damaging hacks. The administration had to deal with the aftermath of the sprawling 2020 Russian intrusion into federal networks via software made by SolarWinds, as well as a ransomware attack that temporarily shut the nation's largest fuel pipeline operator.

Senate Republicans Urging EPA to Withdraw Power Plant Rule, The Hill

Thirty-nine Senate Republicans called on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Tuesday to withdraw its proposed power plant rule, alleging that the regulations are fundamentally flawed and run afoul of a Supreme Court ruling on the agency's powers last year.

The proposal, which aims to curb planet-warming emissions from fossil-fired power plants, would require coal plants to capture 90 percent of their emissions by 2030 and give gas plants the option to capture 90 percent of their emissions by 2035 or run mostly on hydrogen energy by 2038.

However, the more than three dozen members of the Senate GOP — led by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) and joined by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — argued that the carbon capture and clean hydrogen technologies required under the rule are "still nascent and have not yet been adequately demonstrated."

"Congress's recent provision of billions in funding for research, development, and demonstration for these technologies demonstrates the technologies are not adequately demonstrated and not sufficiently mature for use in regulatory mandates," the senators said in Tuesday's letter to EPA Administrator Michael Regan.

The group accused the EPA of "effectively" requiring coal plants to shut down with its carbon capture mandates, noting that capture technology is "not commercially operational for any coal or natural gas plant in the United States" and "not viable at commercial scale yet."

When the rule was first proposed in May, Regan acknowledged that it was likely to prompt some coal plants to shut down.

"We will see some coal retirements, but the way this program is designed, this is really a decision that will be made company-by-company and state-by-state," he said at the time. "It gives a ton of flexibility so that the power sector can make individual decisions based on available technology and the resources that they want to expend."

The GOP senators also claimed in Tuesday's letter that the proposal is in "direct conflict" with the Supreme Court's decision in West Virginia v. EPA last June, which ruled that Congress did not authorize the agency to induce a systemwide shift toward more climate-friendly sources.

"While the Agency falsely claims this does not run afoul of the Supreme Court's decision, it is undeniable the proposal would require generation shifting that the Court has definitively found Congress has never granted EPA the authority to require under the Clean Air Act," they added.

Hurricane Season Threatens to Stir Volatility for Oil and Gas Prices, MSN

As a rare Pacific storm bears down on Mexico and the U.S. Southwest, investors are reminded that the energy market may still see significant disruptions with hurricane season in the Atlantic having just entered its peak.

Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30, with most activity happening between mid-August and mid-October — and Sept. 10 marking the peak of the season, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

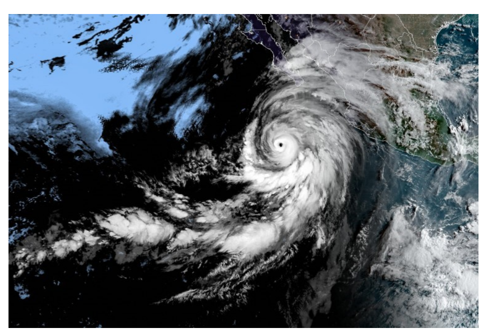
There are at least four tropical waves to keep an eye on — with at least two of them with a pretty good chance to get into the Gulf of Mexico and disrupt oil-and-gas operations, said Flynn.

So far this year, oil and natural-gas prices haven't see much impact from the risks to operations in the Gulf.

U.S. benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude based on the front-month contract, traded around 0.7% lower month to date and has climbed by 1.2% for the year, according to Dow Jones Market Data. U.S. natural-gas futures have lost nearly 3.2% this month and dropped by 43% year to date.

Meanwhile, Hurricane Hilary was in the headlines as it reached Category 4 strength off Mexico's Pacific coast and threatened to return to tropical storm status as it nears Southern California this weekend.

Monitoring Atlantic hurricanes are important to the oil and natural-gas market given that the Gulf of Mexico federal offshore oil production accounts for 15% of total U.S. crude-oil output, while federal offshore natural-gas production in the Gulf accounts for 5% of the nation's total dry production, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. More than 47% of U.S. petroleum refining capacity and 51% of total U.S. natural-gas processing plant capacity are located along the Gulf coast.



US Gulf Refineries Keep Pace Despite Heat, Argus

US Gulf coast refineries are maintaining typical utilization rates so far this summer, despite the challenges extreme heat can bring to industrial operations.

US Gulf coast refinery utilization rates have largely remained above the five-year average so far this summer, despite prolonged periods of extreme heat that can cut unit efficiency, stress equipment and increase the chance of power outages (See table). Gulf coast utilization climbed to 94.6pc in the week ending 11 August, which is typical for the summer season, while crude throughputs were 8.96mn b/d, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), down from 9.09mn b/d the same time a year earlier. Gulf coast refineries produced 2.18mn b/d of gasoline the same week, down slightly from 2.23mn b/d a year prior.

The Houston, Texas, area is currently in a three-week stretch of daily highs above 100°F, with below-average precipitation, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). Temperatures throughout Texas and the Gulf coast are expected to remain "likely above" average in the next two weeks.

The summer has not been without its challenges for operators. Utilization rates took a temporary dip in July from 95pc to 91pc, and there have been several sizeable outages in the region in July and August. This includes multiple flaring events and maintenance to ExxonMobil's 369,000 b/d refinery in Beaumont, Texas, as its coker unit ran at reduced capacity because of heat-related issues, according to sources familiar with operations. Marathon Petroleum's 593,000 b/d Galveston Bay refinery in Texas City, Texas, also reported an unplanned fluid catalytic cracking (FCC) unit shutdown on 21 July and a sulphur recovery unit malfunction the next day after after a tail gas treating unit overheated.

But overall regional production has remained robust heading into the late summer and the height of the Atlantic basin hurricane season — which can prove to be a significant threat of a different source to refiners.

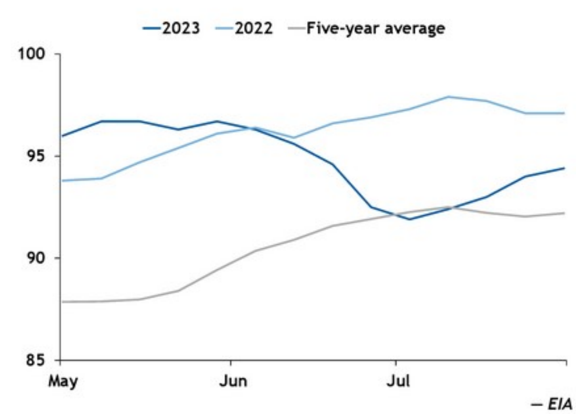
Hurricanes season threats loom

This year's record Gulf coast heat has so far coincided with relatively mild tropical storm activity, but forecasters have upped expectations for an intense peak to the hurricane season through October. This would increase risks for refinery outages.

The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) upgraded its forecast earlier this month to a 60pc likelihood of an "above-average" hurricane season because of "record-warm Atlantic sea surface temperatures." NOAA now projects 14-21 named storms, of which, 6-11 will become hurricanes, and 2-5 of those will reach major hurricane status — category 3, 4 or 5 storms — with sustained winds of 111 mph or higher.

Major storms can shut-in offshore Gulf of Mexico crude production, which is a key source of crude for Gulf coast refiners. A "high-impact" hurricane that disrupts Gulf of Mexico crude production by 80pc could increase monthly average retail gasoline prices by up to 30¢/USG, according to a recent EIA report. But hurricanes have had less impact on energy markets in recent years as a greater share of US oil and natural gas output comes from onshore.

The high winds and flooding tied to hurricanes still pose a threat to Gulf refineries and petrochemical plants, however, particularly for power loss. A US Chemical Safety Board analysis of chemical releases during hurricanes urged the US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to adopt more stringent standards for the electric grid to reduce accidents caused by hurricanes and unpredictable extreme weather.



Oil Worker Health Care Fund is Sought by New Mexico Congressman in Swing District, AP

U.S. oil field workers and their immediate relatives would be compensated for uninsured medical costs related to air pollution and heat-related illness, under a bill introduced by a first-term Democratic congressman from New Mexico.

U.S. Rep. Gabe Vasquez said his bill would require oil and natural gas companies to pay into a trust that provides reimbursement to workers for health costs associated with ailments linked to methane and smog, including respiratory problems such as asthma.

Workers would be eligible to seek reimbursement for costs not covered by private insurance, Medicare or Medicaid, he said. Eligibility for specific medical conditions would be determined under federal labor and workplace safety guidelines.

Vasquez said the proposal is an outgrowth of concerns he has heard from oil field workers in southeastern New Mexico — and his observations about extensive profits and executive compensation among major petroleum companies. New Mexico is the nation's second-largest oil producer behind Texas.

"If you're an energy worker in Hobbs or Carlsbad who has a child who has asthma, you would benefit from this legislation," Vasquez said.

Annual contributions to a health care trust for oil workers would be required of energy companies with annual revenues over $50 million. Those companies would have to pay into the fund the same amount of money as they pay their 10 highest-paid employees, including bonuses and deferred compensation.

The bill has little chance of passing in the GOP-controlled House, where Republicans this year approved a package that would sharply increase domestic production of fossil fuels and ease permitting restrictions that delay pipelines, refineries and other projects.

The initiative still marks a shift in focus from an unfettered support of the oil industry under Vasquez's Republican predecessor, Yvette Herrell, and her criticism of energy policies under the Biden administration that she said hindered production of oil and other fossil fuels.

Vasquez flipped the district — which extends from the U.S. border with Mexico to Albuquerque — to Democratic control in 2022, under newly drawn congressional districts that divvied up a major oil-producing region of New Mexico among three districts. Republicans are challenging the redistricting in state district court.

The bill from Vasquez includes compensation for heat-related illness in the workplace — an area of increasing concern as the energy sector and other industries contend with record-breaking temperatures this summer. President Joe Biden in July announced new steps aimed to protect workers, including hazard alerts for extreme heat, improved forecasting and better access to drinking water on the job.

Vasquez announced details of the health compensation bill at a gathering in Hobbs, accompanied by advocates for the immigrant-rights group Somos Un Pueblo Unido. The event included testimonials from oil field workers and their spouses, who spoke in Spanish about frustrations with working conditions.

The bill is modeled after a compensation program for coal miners disabled by black lung disease, under the provisions of a 1969 law, Vasquez said.

Opinion: Discover and Develop Leadership Talent Hiding in Plain Sight, Smart Brief

Every company has hidden leaders. It's your job to find them, develop them and grow their potential. This is how you maximize the talent hiding within your organization. You must invest in the potential of your hidden leaders because it will unlock a wealth of talent, drive innovation and create a pipeline of future leaders.

We easily notice those who make sure their skills are in the limelight, but there are others who are working just as hard and achieving just as much, who remain virtually unknown in the organization. But why? In my workshop, "The Invisible Leaders: How to Find Them and Let Them Shine," I explain how you can help the hidden leaders in your organization be recognized for the great work they do.

When we make the effort to uncover the invisible talent, employees gain the success they deserve and the company gains the insight of experienced, capable workers who already know the organization inside and out. If this kind of advantage on your competition appeals to you, read on and to find out why your next great talent may be hiding in plain sight.

Here are four ways to identify the hidden talent in your organization. Look for the employees who are:

1. Afraid to disagree at work
Even if you have clearly set the ground rules in your organization to encourage respectful debate over the approaches to any given problem, many regions of the world frown on any hint of dissent from subordinates. Because questioning authority is largely unheard of in some cultures, it can be hard for some who were raised outside of Western Europe or North America to embrace the idea of true cross-hierarchy discourse.
What to Do: Start by stressing the "why" of your request for ideas or input. It's not enough, in today's diverse workforce, to ask people to "speak up" — you have to clearly explain that your looking for differing opinions, that you value seeing all the angles and that you expect the company to benefit from everyone's ideas. Be explicit that you are not simply looking to hear that your take on an issue is the best approach.

2. Reluctant to express ideas and contribute at meetings
Similarly, your hidden leaders may be consciously trying to avoid falling into the trap of simply being someone who says "yes, that's wonderful!" to what is proposed. If they aren't the first to offer up an idea, because culturally they have been discouraged from doing so, they may be avoiding the appearance of stereotypical blanket agreement. This may be even more true if there are multiple alternative options on the table and people feel pressure to "choose sides."
What to Do: Fill your toolbox with questions and phrases that encourage everyone to contribute. While round-table discus-

Opinion: Discover and Develop Leadership Talent Hiding in Plain Sight, Smart Brief

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sions can put people on the spot, you can sometimes modify the approach to foster an idea storm. Encourage a discussion that has people build on the idea — modify, adjust or add as necessary. You may find that when the request is to add, rather than simply agree or disagree, your hidden leaders may come out with some truly innovative thoughts and let you see their hidden value.

3. Hesitant to speak up at work
In cultures where individualism or standing out is not so highly prized as it is in western countries, many people would consciously want to avoid becoming known as the person who always has something to say. To some, the thought of speaking up early and often would be extremely uncomfortable. They might be concerned that offering their opinion too eagerly would actually result in their thoughts being more easily dismissed.

What to Do: If you want to draw out your hidden talent and see where the light really shines, be clear that you expect to hear from everyone. Be sure to explain your reasoning — this is not merely a team building exercise or to make everyone feel included — you are seeking the best and the brightest of ideas, regardless of hierarchy. Frequently structure the input you collect in a way that ensures you hear from everyone, and people will start to feel safer in sharing their thoughts.

4. Unsure how to be heard in chaotic and boisterous environments
Some of your hidden leaders might have a strong dislike for uncertain situations, where they are not clear on the rules or boundaries for the discussion. This can be more than just a dislike for public speaking or group situations — some introverts prefer to avoid conditions where they are not absolutely sure on how to participate. Even if they have a great idea or an interesting angle on the topic, introverts may prefer to hold back rather than risk the possibility of being embarrassed or misunderstood.
What to Do: Especially in situations where you have a group that can be chaotic or boisterous, or where you have one or more strong voices at the table, be sure to offer alternative means to share ideas — ask everyone to email their thoughts, or to take the time to come see you one-on-one. This may also require you to set a deadline for input and to reinforce that you expect to hear from everyone. Once you establish other pathways to input as a valid option for your less extroverted employees, you may not need to make it mandatory in future.

Hidden leaders possess valuable skills, expertise and qualities that can contribute to the success of the organization. By investing in their development and providing opportunities for growth, companies can unlock their untapped potential.

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