

Offshore Service Vessels Pleads Guilty



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Offshore Service Vessels, LLC (OSV), a Louisiana headquartered company, has pleaded guilty to one felony count of violating the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships (APPS). OSV owns and operates the *R/V Laurence M. Gould* (*R/V Gould*), an American-flagged ice-breaking research vessel, which was alleged to have discharged oily waste water directly overboard from July 2004 until September 2005.

According to court documents, the *R/V Gould* generated large quantities of waste oil due to leaks and drips from the engines' lubrication and fuel systems, as well as through the normal operation of vessel machinery. This waste oil combined with water, detergents, solvents, and other wastes that accumulated in bilges of the vessel to form oily waste water. According to Federal and International law, this wastewater is then supposed to be treated through an oily water separator prior to being discharged overboard.

However, when the bilge holding tank would fill up and could not receive more wastewater, crew members would intermittently discharge the contaminated oily wastewater directly overboard through the use of a "magic pipe," bypassing the required oily water separator. Moreover, OSV had prior knowledge that the oily water separator was not functioning properly and knew that the engine room crew members would be discharging the bilge water holding tank directly into the ocean.

As part of the plea agreement, OSV has agreed to pay a criminal fine totaling \$1,750,000 and a community service payment of \$350,000, and to serve three years probation, during which time the company will adhere to an strict and intrusive Environmental Compliance Plan.

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