

# Photographer Briefly Detained by Police Near BP's Texas City Refinery

by [Stephen Engelberg](#)

ProPublica, July 2, 10:30 p.m.



**Lance Rosenfield/ProPublica**

*This story is part of an ongoing collaboration between ProPublica and FRONTLINE (PBS).*

A photographer taking pictures for these articles, was detained Friday while shooting pictures in Texas City, Texas.

The photographer, Lance Rosenfield, said that shortly after arriving in town, he was confronted by a BP security officer, local police and a man who identified himself as an agent of the Department of Homeland Security. He was released after the police reviewed the pictures he had taken on Friday and recorded his date of birth, Social Security number and other personal information.

The police officer then turned that information over to the BP security guard under what he said was standard procedure, according to Rosenfield.

## **No charges were filed.**

Rosenfield, an experienced freelance photographer, said he was detained shortly after shooting a photograph of a Texas City sign on a public roadway. Rosenfield said he was followed by a BP employee in a truck after taking the picture and blocked by two police cars when he pulled into a gas station.

According to Rosenfield, the officers said they had a right to look at photos taken near secured areas of the refinery, even if they were shot from public property. Rosenfield said he was told he would be "taken in" if he declined to comply. Michael Marr, a BP spokesman, released a statement explaining the company's actions:

"BP Security followed the industry practice that is required by federal law. The photographer was released with his photographs after those photos were viewed by a representative of the Joint Terrorism Task Force who determined that the photographer's actions did not pose a threat to public safety."

Paul Steiger, editor-in-chief of ProPublica, said: "We certainly appreciate the need to secure the

nation's refineries. But we're deeply troubled by BP's conduct here, especially when they knew we were working on deadline on critical stories about this very facility. And we see no reason why, if law enforcement needed to review the unpublished photographs, that should have included sharing them with a representative of a private company."

This article is part of an ongoing investigation



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The BP oil disaster in the Gulf has had untold health, economic and environmental effects.

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# Federal Agencies: Some Workers Should Wear Respirators

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, Yesterday, 11:34 a.m.

In a slight change of course, two federal agencies have issued official guidance regarding the use of respirators by cleanup workers in the Gulf.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, workers near the source of the spill will be provided respirators and should use them when: 1) “air monitoring indicates elevated level of contaminants,” 2) “when professional judgment determines there is potential exposure,” or 3) “when workers are reporting health effects.”



Two federal agencies have issued guidance on respirators for cleanup workers near the source of the oil spill in the Gulf. (Chris Graythen/Getty Images)

## Anonymous Tipline

If you work for BP or a contractor on a rig in the Gulf, or anywhere else, we'd like to hear from you. Tell us about your work conditions, your management, and your observations of what is happening. We will not publish your identity. Call 917-512-0254, fax documents to 212-514-5250 or e-mail [Abrahm Lustgarten](#).

Here's the [language of their new guidance](#) [1]:

For workers involved in source control activities, respirators should be used in those situations where potentially excessive exposure is reasonably anticipated or where indicated by exposure assessment or where symptoms/health effects are being reported.

It's the first time these agencies have issued any formal guidance on when Gulf cleanup workers should wear respirators; in the past, both the government and BP have said respirators were not needed. But as industrial hygienist and former OSHA inspector Eileen Senn noted, “[It remains to be seen](#) [2] if the NIOSH/OSHA recommendations will translate into more Gulf workers receiving respirators.” Senn pointed out that the guidance does not define what constitutes “excessive exposure,” even though OSHA and NIOSH have different chemical exposure limits. (As we've noted, OSHA chief David Michaels has called his agency's limits “[outrageously out of date](#) [3].”)

When I asked NIOSH about the new respirator recommendations, Chief of Staff Frank Hearl told me the decision was made in order to “ramp up the degree of protection,” though he said enforcement was out of his agency's jurisdiction.

“Coming from the government, jointly from NIOSH and OSHA, that’s a pretty strong statement of advice,” Hearl said.

I’ve also called OSHA, but have not yet heard back.

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Muck it.

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## Govt's Banned Trailers, Unsafe for Housing, Reappear in Gulf

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, July 1, 4:28 p.m



**A FEMA trailer in Coden, Ala. (Bill Starling/ProPublica)**

Large-scale disaster — this time in the form of BP's crude oil — has again hit the Gulf Coast, and with it have returned the familiar white trailers that the government provided to survivors of Hurricane Katrina years ago.

According to The New York Times, these trailers — known to have high levels of formaldehyde, a [carcinogen](#) -- are popping up again in connection with the BP oil disaster, potentially putting more people at risk of the health problems associated with the industrial chemical: nasal cancer, upper respiratory problems, and leukemia.

In March, The Washington Post reported that the federal government was [offloading thousands](#) of these old FEMA trailers. Some of them, purchased in bulk by middlemen, are [now being resold to cleanup workers](#) and their employers, who are scrambling for housing, the Times reported, even though the government has "[banned them](#) from ever being used for long-term housing again."

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## Owners of Ruptured Well Feud Over Blame, Liability

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, July 1, 1:26 p.m.



**A drilling platform near the Transocean Discoverer Enterprise ship burns off gas collected at the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill on June 25, 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico. (Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images)**

U.S.-based Anadarko Petroleum, which owns a 25 percent stake in BP's ruptured well in the Gulf, has been publicly criticizing its British partner for "[reckless decisions and actions](#)," even though [Anadarko itself approved well designs](#) that many have called risky, according to the Financial Times.

In a statement last month, Anadarko said "this tragedy was preventable and the direct result of [BP's reckless decisions and actions](#)," arguing that "BP operated unsafely and failed to monitor and react to several critical warning signs."

The company's criticisms of its partner, however, focus on operating decisions, and not on the well design choices that [saved BP time and money](#) — decisions that U.S. lawmakers have criticized as [shortcuts](#). Those decisions included the use of a [cheaper, "long string" well design](#) and fewer [centering devices](#) than recommended -- both of which would have increased the risk of gas flow problems, which caused the explosion at the well.) Anadarko had approved those designs.

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## EPA's Initial Testing Finds Dispersants Roughly Equal, But Raises Questions

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, June 30, 3:49 p.m.



**An Air Force Reserve plane drops dispersant into the Gulf of Mexico in this May file photo from the USAF.**

After ordering BP last month to find and switch to a less toxic chemical dispersant than Corexit — which BP has sprayed in record quantities into the Gulf of Mexico -- the EPA announced today that based on initial testing, all eight dispersants the agency is studying “are roughly equal in toxicity.”

So far, however, the dispersants have been tested only on their own — not in combination with oil, which [some scientists believe](#) is more toxic than either oil or dispersant alone.

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## **BP Fined \$5.2 Million for False Reporting**

June 30, 2:45 p.m.

## **Health Effects After Exxon Valdez Went Unstudied**

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, June 30, 11:41 a.m.



Tugboats tow the Exxon Valdez in this April 5, 1989, file photo (Chris Wilkins Getty Images/AFP)

In a report on Tuesday, McClatchy Newspapers pointed out that [neither industry nor the government](#) seems to have studied the health of Exxon Valdez cleanup workers after the 1989 spill.

Since oil started pouring from BP's well into the Gulf of Mexico, there have been promises all around: promises from oil executives “[to learn new lessons](#),” promises from the EPA to [remedy the dearth of science](#) about dispersants -- promises addressing the same concerns that could have been studied decades ago after spills like Exxon's.

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## **After 3 Weeks, BP Handed Over Samples Requested By Scientists**

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, June 30, 9:10 a.m.



**Waves carry in blobs of oil as they wash ashore from the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico on June 26, 2010, in Orange Beach, Ala. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)**

Last week, we noted that government scientists had concluded that the deepwater plumes of dispersed oil found in the Gulf of Mexico [had originated](#) from BP's ruptured well.

We also noted, however, that BP had previously [refused to provide oil samples](#) to scientists who needed them to perform chemical "fingerprinting" tests that would more clearly establish origin--and as of last week, we weren't sure if those scientists had received the samples yet.

Apparently, they hadn't until [last Friday](#).

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## **[Gulf Disaster Changes Landscape for Scientists Eager to Do Research](#)**

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, June 29, 12:43 p.m.



**Getty Images**

At a time when some scientists are more eager than ever to gather information on the state of the Gulf, it seems their access to the Gulf is also more limited than ever. That's because the federal government has swept up the available research vessels and hired consulting firms to do the work, according to Richard Shaw, associate dean of the School of the Coast and Environment at Louisiana State University. As a result, ship time--and direct access to the Gulf to take samples--is nearly impossible for independent scientists to come by.

"It's hard for academics to participate in the offshore component of this research," Shaw said. "It's pretty strange."

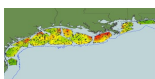
Shaw told me that he doesn't know when anyone on his staff will get ship time. His university, LSU, was recently awarded \$5 million from BP to study dispersants.

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## **Scientists Predict Larger 'Dead Zones' in Gulf**

by [Marian Wang](#)

ProPublica, June 29, 4:45 a.m.



Federally-funded scientists predicted a "[larger than average](#)" dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico this year, but said it's unclear what the oil spill's effects on the dead zone will be.

Dead zones are underwater areas where oxygen levels are so depleted that they're inhospitable to most marine life. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, these hypoxic (or low-oxygen) areas develop in the Gulf every summer. ([Quick science lesson](#): Typically, nutrient runoff stimulates growth of algae that gets decomposed by oxygen-consuming bacteria, leading to dead zones.)

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# Check Out Our BP Gulf Oil Spill Slideshow

by [Krista Kjellman Schmidt](#)

ProPublica, May 18, 2010

As millions of barrels of oil have spilled into the Gulf of Mexico as a result of the Deepwater Horizon spill, photographers have documented the disaster in a way words cannot. We think these images are a vital part of [our continuing coverage](#) of the Gulf oil spill and will be regularly adding to them.

Check out our [full coverage of the Gulf oil spill](#).