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## Missing Gulf oil rig workers considered dead, families told

By Chris Kirkham, The Times-Picayune  
April 22, 2010, 3:06PM

Representatives of two of the 11 people still missing after an oil rig explosion south of Venice say the missing workers' families were told earlier today that they are considered dead.

Steve Gordon, a Houston attorney who is representing Tracy Kleppinger, the wife of worker Karl Kleppinger Jr. of Natchez, Miss., said his client was told by rig owner Transocean Ltd. that Kleppinger is considered deceased. Gordon said the company has sent grievors to be with Tracy Kleppinger.

In response, the law firm Gordon, Elias and Seely filed a wrongful death lawsuit this afternoon in Harris County, Texas, against Transocean and BP, which leased the rig.

Carolyn Kemp, the grandmother of missing worker Wyatt Kemp of Jonesville, La., also said today that Kemp's family had been informed that he was dead.

At a news conference this afternoon, a vice president of Transocean, Adrian Rose, confirmed that the company has been calling next of kin but denied that loved ones have been told the workers are deceased.

"We can't be definitive yet, not until search and rescue efforts are completed," Rose said.

The Coast Guard has not confirmed any deaths so far, and the effort is still officially considered a search and rescue mission. But the Coast Guard said this afternoon that the search mission would only continue for another 12 hours.

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