



0. FAILURE of the BLOWOUT PREVENTER - Story Preface

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This screenshot, from a video monitoring camera, depicts oil from the Macondo Well surging into the Gulf of Mexico. The blowout preventer, which should have stopped this from occurring if an accident occurred at the well site, had failed. Image online via BP.

While in his office aboard Deepwater Horizon, Mike Williams heard the vessel's diesel engines making wild sounds. Getting up to investigate was one of the last things he did before disaster struck.

Reaching for a three-inch steel door, he heard a loud whooshing sound:

*These are three inch thick, steel, fire-rated doors with six stainless steel hinges supporting 'em on the frame. As I reach for the handle, I heard this awful hissing noise, this whoosh. And at the height of the hiss, a huge explosion. The explosion literally rips the door from the hinges, hits, impacts me and takes me to the other side of the shop. And I'm up against a wall, when I finally come around, with a door on top of me. And I remember thinking to myself, "You know, this, this is it. I'm gonna die right here."*

*I began to crawl across the floor. As I got to the next door, it exploded. And took me, the door, and slid me about 35 feet backwards again. And planted me up against another wall . . . And at that point, I made a decision. "I'm going to get outside. I may die out there, but I'm gonna get outside." So I crawl across the grid work of the floor and make my way to that opening, where I see the light. I made it out the door and I thought to myself, "I've accomplished what I set out to accomplish. I made it outside. At least now I can breathe. I may die out here, but I can breathe."*

Grabbing a life jacket, Williams was near a lifeboat, but he had things to do on the rig. His job required him to report to the bridge. When he arrived there, he believed the blowout preventer (also known as a BOP) had failed because emergency systems weren't working:

*The BOP that was supposed to protect us and keep us from the blowout obviously had failed. And now, the emergency disconnect to get us away from this fuel source has failed. We have no communications to the BOP.*

Looking out the bridge window, Williams saw a lifeboat leaving the doomed vessel. The captain said he had given the order to abandon ship. But ... the lifeboat was leaving while eight survivors were still on board.

Although the crew had practiced lifeboat drills once a week, panicked people were not following procedures:

*They have left, without the captain and without knowing that they had everyone that had survived all this onboard. I've been left now by two lifeboats. And I look at the captain and I said, 'What do we do now? By now, the fire is not only on the derrick, it's starting to spread to the deck. At that point, there were several more explosions, large, intense explosions.'*

Some of the survivors launched an inflatable raft, but three people - including Williams - were still on board. They had no choice but to jump into the Gulf because if they stayed on board, they would burn to death.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FAILURE-of-the-BLOWOUT-PREVENTER-Deepwater-Horizon-Disaster-in-the-Gulf>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/FAILURE-of-the-BLOWOUT-PREVENTER-Deepwater-Horizon-Disaster-in-the-Gulf>

## Media Stream



### Deepwater Horizon - Oil Surges into the Gulf

Screenshot from video monitoring leaking oil at the Macondo Well Site in the Gulf of Mexico. Online via BP (British Petroleum).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Deepwater-Horizon-Oil-Surges-into-the-Gulf>