Pipeline Abandonment in the Gulf of Mexico Requires Safe Subsea Isolation

*Discovery uses T.D. Williamson’s double block and bleed technology to minimize costs and eliminate environmental impact in preparation for pipeline abandonment.*

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**HOUSTON, TX, JUNE 17, 2015** – There are no shortcuts when it comes to decommissioning and abandoning offshore production platforms. The process is time-consuming, costly, and involves meeting stringent regulatory requirements.
But what if offshore operators could reduce the risk of leaks when isolating the pipelines that feed into the platform? That would help them reduce environmental concerns, aid in regulatory compliance, and increase operational safety.

Those were the precise benefits Discovery Producer Services LLC, an American natural gas midstream service provider operated by Williams, realized when they decommissioned and abandoned a pipeline tied into production facilities in the South Timbalier area offshore Louisiana earlier this year. The project, located at a depth of 43 meters (140 feet), included cutting and capping an 18-inch gathering line – part of a looped system being tied into another platform – without disrupting production.

As it would ultimately feed into another pipeline system, the 18-inch line was to remain pressurized and protected from seawater ingress throughout the cutting and capping operation. To accomplish these goals, Williams chose to isolate the line using STOPPLE® Train technology – a double block and bleed isolation system from pipeline service company T.D. Williamson.

Watch this video to learn how a double block and bleed isolation works.

The STOPPLE Train isolation provides a number of benefits:

- Reduced cost: fewer fittings, less time on-site, higher first-time success
- Reduced risk: fewer hot taps and welds (requires only one entry point)
- Increased safety: two independent seals and bleed port
- Ensured environmental stewardship: no product release

In contrast to traditional double block and bleed isolations requiring two hot taps and two fittings, the STOPPLE Train system provides two independent plugging seals inserted through a single hot tap entry – in this case, through a mechanical clamp and permanent ball valve. Less equipment affixed to a line and fewer tapped openings mean an exponential reduction in cost and risk, particularly when working with divers subsea.

To further reduce risk to personnel and the environment, this double block and bleed method utilizes a bleed port between the two seals. The port captures any product that potentially escapes past the first seal, and removes it to a safe location away from the divers.

“This subsea isolation project was completed with no disruption to production,” says Randy Miley, TDW Gulf Coast Service Center Manager. “Discovery's job safety was enhanced and its environmental impact was brought to zero.”

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About T.D. Williamson

Drawing upon a 95-year history of industry leadership, TDW is a global solutions provider for the owners and operators of pressurized piping systems. TDW delivers a comprehensive portfolio of solutions for onshore and offshore applications, including hot tapping and plugging, pipeline cleaning, integrity inspection, pigging, and non-tethered plugging pig technology.
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