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MMS suspends permits for Gulf drilling regardless of water depth

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The Minerals Management Service has stopped issuing permits for new oil and gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico regardless of water depth, effectively extending [President Obama](#)'s previously announced suspension of permits for deepwater drilling into the shallow waters.

Michael J. Saucier, regional supervisor of field operations for the MMS Gulf of Mexico region, said in an e-mail to one company seeking a permit that "until further notice we have been informed not to approve or allow any drilling not matter the water depth." Only three days earlier the company had been informed that drilling in water up to 500 feet deep would not be affected by the Obama moratorium.

Obama last week announced that he would suspend drilling in deepwater in the Gulf for six months, effectively delaying plans for at least 30 rigs. But the new ban on shallow water drilling would affect many more companies and it would fly in the face of lobbying by Gulf coast lawmakers, who have asked that shallow water drilling continue to protect the jobs that depend on such activity.