

Kulluk Grounding Investigation Gets Underway

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Now that the Royal Dutch Shell floating drill rig Kulluk has been safely anchored up in Kiliuda Bay, the U.S. Coast Guard is launching an official "marine casualty" investigation into its grounding.

Rear Admiral Thomas Ostebo, the Coast Guard commander in Alaska, ordered the formal investigation into the circumstances and contributing factors involved in the grounding of the giant floating drill rig on the shore of Sitkalidak Island New Year's Eve.

A Coast Guard release stated a formal marine casualty investigation is convened when a vessel problem has considerable regional significance, may indicate vessel class problems, or is the best means to assess technical issues that may have contributed to the incident.

The formal inquiry will be led by a Coast Guard investigating officer yet to be named. The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will assist as technical advisers.

The investigation will probe every aspect of the grounding and events that led up to it, including the causes of the incident, whether there is evidence that any failure of material or whether there is evidence of misconduct, inattention, negligence or willful violation of the law by any personnel.

The marine casualty investigation likely will take several months to complete.