**An Environmental Disaster**

When BP’s Deepwater Horizon oil well exploded in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, killing 11 men working on the platform and sending oil gushing into the sea for months, there was little doubt that it was a big breaking news story. On the day it occurred and for weeks after, the oil spill was played on front pages of newspapers and websites, as well as at the top of newscasts around the world.

The BP spill, as it became known, had all the elements of an important news story. The most compelling element was its impact – it was the worst environmental disaster the United States had ever faced, according to government officials - and the spill affected the US coastline from Louisiana to Florida. Some of those whose livelihoods depended on the fishing and tourism industries that thrive along the coast lost jobs. Thousands of birds and hundreds of dolphins were found dead. Photographs of oil-covered pelicans brought home the impact of the catastrophe on wildlife.

After the explosion, a six-month moratorium on offshore drilling was enacted, but there was no doubt that the BP spill would affect offshore oil drilling policy in the United States for the foreseeable future.

* What made the BP spill front-page news?
* What newsworthiness factors apply?
* Is front page news more often good or bad? Why?