

# Louisiana shrimpers sue BP over oil spill

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\* Transocean and Halliburton also named as defendants

\* Lawsuit is first for economic losses from blowout

\* Suit filed on behalf of all coastal Louisiana interests

HOUSTON, April 29 (Reuters) - Louisiana shrimpers have filed a class-action lawsuit against oil giant BP Plc <BP.L> and owners of the oil rig that exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, marking the first claim for economic losses stemming from the disaster.

The lawsuit was filed late on Wednesday in U.S. District Court in New Orleans as London-based BP and the U.S. Coast Guard fought to contain a massive oil slick expected to hit the Gulf Coast on Friday. [ID:nN29104665]

The suit was filed on behalf of two commercial shrimp fishermen named in the suit, and all other coastal Louisiana residents whose livelihoods are threatened by the spill.

The Coast Guard estimates that 5,000 barrels (210,000 gallons) of crude oil a day is gushing from the sea floor where the blowout occurred, and authorities have said it could take weeks to cap the leak as BP mounts what it calls the largest oil spill containment operation in history.

The suit names as defendants BP, which holds the lease to the offshore well; Swiss-based Transocean Ltd <RIGN.S> <RIG.N>, owner of the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform that exploded in flames on April 20 and collapsed two days later; and Halliburton Energy Services Inc <HAL.N>, which the suit says was engaging in cementing operations of the well and well cap.

The complaint says Halliburton "improperly and negligently performed these duties, increasing the pressure at the well and contributing to the fire, explosion and resulting oil spill."

The suit also names Cameron International Corp <CAM.N>, which supplied the rig's blow-out prevention equipment "that failed to operate upon the explosion (and) should have prevented the oil spill."

There was no immediate comment about the lawsuit from any of the companies.

The semi-submersible oil drilling rig burst into flames while finishing a well for BP about 40 miles (64 km) southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River.

All the defendants are accused of negligence in the lawsuit, which seeks economic and compensatory damages of at least \$5 million. That sum is the minimum amount required by the federal Class Action Fairness Act, on which jurisdiction for the suit is partially based.

The legal action also seeks an unspecified amount of punitive damages.

"While we're still in the embryonic stages of quantifying the environmental impact, we're watching in real time, and somewhat helplessly, a slow-motion disaster," Louisiana-based lawyer Richard Arsenault, a partner in one of 10 law firms joining the legal action, said in an email.

The case is Cooper and Anderson vs. BP, 2:10-cv-01229. (Writing by Steve Gorman; editing by Mary Milliken and Mohammad Zargham)