

James Watson, Director

James Watson was sworn in as the Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement on December 1, 2011. He is responsible for promoting safety, protecting the environment and conserving resources through the vigorous regulatory oversight and enforcement of offshore operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.

Prior to his appointment as Bureau Director, he served as the U.S. Coast Guard's Director of Prevention Policy for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship where he was responsible for maritime investigations, quality traveling inspectors, waterways management, boating safety, commercial vessel safety and security, and ports and cargo safety and security. Watson served as the Deputy Commander of the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command in April 2010, and, on June 1, 2010, was designated as the Federal On-Scene Coordinator for the government-wide response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Watson began his career as a cadet at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 1974. Upon graduation in 1978, he received his commission as an Ensign in the U.S. Coast Guard. Over the course of his 33 year active duty career, Watson attained the rank of Rear Admiral, serving in a variety of both management and operational positions in Washington, D.C. and at field units across the country. His previous staff assignments include: Chief of Staff of the Seventh Coast Guard District in Miami, Fla.; Chief, Office of Budget and Programs; Program Reviewer - Office of Budget and Programs; Staff Naval Architect - U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Center; and Staff Engineer - Marine Technical and Hazardous Materials Division. His prior field assignments include: Commanding Officer Marine Safety Office Miami; Commanding Officer Marine Safety Office San Diego; Executive Officer Marine Safety Office Savannah; Chief of Port Operations, Marine Safety Office Puget Sound; and Engineering Officer on the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bibb.

A 1978 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy with a Bachelors of Science degree in Marine Engineering, Watson also earned two Master of Science degrees from the University of Michigan in 1985, one in Mechanical Engineering and the other in Naval Architecture. In 2001 he graduated from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces with a master's degree in Strategic Studies.