

Rep. Peter Welch on Wednesday grilled BP President Lamar McKay about the oil company's failure to heed safety warnings ahead of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

At a hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Welch highlighted the devastating ecological and economic toll of the spill and called on BP to ensure that those affected by it would be fully compensated.

"What we were told could never happen did happen," Welch said. "We were told that if the unimaginable happened, we had a fail-safe mechanism that would make certain there would be no harm. And of course the tragedy is that these assurances proved wrong."

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Citing a March 2001 R&B Falcon Deepwater Horizon assurance report, Welch asked McKay, "The question I have is if BP had a report that it commissioned for review of the safety mechanism of the blowout preventer and it contains 260 failure modes, under what construction of the English language is a device with 260 failure modes fail safe?"

In his opening statement, Welch recalled the devastation he saw last Friday when he visited the Gulf region with a bipartisan delegation of Energy and Commerce Committee members. Citing the economic toll the spill has taken on the fishing and tourism industries, he asked McKay to commit to compensating those affected.

"The one question I want conclusively answered is whether BP, who has the ultimate responsibility here, is going to acknowledge specifically and categorically that it will not limit its liability to those fishermen and women and those tourist industries on the gulf coast – those people who have protected the environment – that you will not stop your obligation at the \$75 million limit that was established after Exxon Valdez," Welch said. "If they have been harmed by conduct that you're responsible for, then I want – and I think all of us want – an assurance that those fishermen and women, those folks in the tourist industry will be made whole."

Welch recently cosponsored the BP Deepwater Horizon Inquiry Commission Act, which would create an independent, non-partisan commission to investigate the causes of the Gulf spill and seek to prevent future incidents from occurring.