

Late Friday, U.S. District Court Judge Carl Barbier announced a legal settlement between British Petroleum and thousands of individuals and businesses that had sued BP for damages arising out of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

According to a [New York Times report](#), BP has agreed to pay \$7.8 billion to settle the legal claims filed by the private plaintiffs against the company. Trial of the case, which was scheduled to begin in New Orleans on Monday, March 5th, was postponed indefinitely, while details of the class action settlement are worked out and formally presented to Judge Barbier for his review.

Critically, the settlement announced Friday does not affect the legal claims being pressed by the federal government, Gulf states and local governments, who have brought their own, separate lawsuits seeking civil penalties, natural resource damages and reimbursement for their own expenses associated with the disaster and the governments' subsequent oil spill remediation efforts. (The government claims had been consolidated with the private lawsuits for a single trial before Judge Barbier.) Nor does the settlement address potential *criminal* charges-not yet filed-that the federal government may pursue against BP and the other companies associated with the Deepwater Horizon disaster, which caused the deaths of 11 workers and resulted in the largest oil spill in U.S. history.

Early press reports suggest that BP was the only corporate defendant able to negotiate a settlement with the private plaintiffs, and that the monetary claims those plaintiffs brought against the other corporate defendants originally named in the litigation-including Transocean and Halliburton-similarly remain unresolved.