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Contents

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Gas Strategies Group

10 Saint Bride Street London UK EC4A 4AD

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T: +44(0) 20 7332 9900 W: www.gasstrategies.com Twitter @GasStrategies



Editorials

+44(0) 20 7332 9957 editor@gasstrategies.com

Subscriptions

+44(0) 20 7332 9976 subscriptions@gasstrategies.com



Hero or Villain? Japanese methane hydrate tests focus hopes and concerns for a potential new source of gas

In February a Japanese government-funded research programme achieved first production of natural gas from subsea methane hydrates marking an important breakthrough in a scheme it has been actively pursuing since 1995. While the process is still very much in an experimental phase rather than anything approximating viable commercial operations, Japan has placed a high priority on it as methane hydrates may well come to represent the country's only major indigenous energy source. Gas Matters examines the commercial potential of the so-called "fire ice and why it is so important for the country" as methane hydrates are sometimes called.







+44 (0) 20 7332 9900 consult@gasstrategies.com



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