NEWS RELEASE

Patterson-UTI Reports Drilling Activity for December 2010

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HOUSTON, Jan. 4, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ --

PATTERSON-UTI ENERGY, INC. (Nasdaq: PTEN) today reported that for the month of December 2010, the Company had an average of 196 drilling rigs operating, including 184 rigs in the United States and 12 rigs in Canada. For the three months ended December 2010, the Company had an average of 194 drilling rigs operating, including 182 rigs in the United States and 12 rigs in Canada.

Average drilling rigs operating reported in the Company's monthly announcements represent the average number of the Company's drilling rigs that were operating under a drilling contract. The Company cautioned that numerous factors in addition to average drilling rigs operating can impact the Company's operating results and that a particular trend in the number of drilling rigs operating may or may not indicate a trend in or be indicative of the Company's financial performance. The Company intends to continue providing monthly updates on drilling rigs operating shortly after the end of each month.

About Patterson-UTI

Patterson-UTI Energy, Inc. subsidiaries primarily provide onshore contract drilling and pressure pumping services to exploration and production companies in North America. Patterson-UTI Drilling Company LLC has approximately 350 marketable land-based drilling rigs that operate primarily in the oil and natural gas producing regions of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and western Canada. Universal Well Services, Inc., Universal Pressure Pumping, Inc. and Universal Wireline, Inc. provide well services primarily in Texas and the Appalachian region.

Statements made in this press release which state the Company's or management's intentions, beliefs, expectations or predictions for the future are forward-looking statements. It is important to note that actual results could differ materially from those discussed in such forward-looking statements. Important factors that could cause actual results to differ materially include, but are not limited to, deterioration in the global economic environment, declines in oil and natural gas prices that could adversely affect demand for the Company's services, and their associated effect on day rates, rig utilization and planned capital expenditures, excess availability of land drilling rigs, including as a result of the reactivation or construction of new land drilling rigs, adverse industry conditions, difficulty in integrating acquisitions, demand for oil and natural gas, shortages of rig equipment, governmental regulations and ability to retain management and field personnel. Additional information concerning factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those in the forward-looking statements is contained from time to time in the Company's SEC filings, which may be obtained by contacting the Company or the SEC. These filings are also available through the Company's web site at **http://www.patenergy.com** or through the SEC's Electronic Data Gathering and Analysis Retrieval System (EDGAR) at **http://www.sec.gov**. We undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statement.

SOURCE PATTERSON-UTI ENERGY, INC.