

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Coast Guard And Local PR Agencies Respond To Vessel Fire Off San Juan Harbor

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The Coast Guard responded on Wednesday to a fire aboard the 561-foot passenger ferry vessel Caribbean Fantasy approximately half a mile off of Punta Salinas, the Coast Guard has made known via press release.

At approximately 7:42 a.m. Wednesday, Coast Guard Sector San Juan received a report of a fire aboard a Panamanian-flagged passenger/cargo ship carrying 511 passengers, including crew en route from the Dominican Republic. Initial reports indicated a manifest of 512, however the vessel returned to port in the Dominican Republic to disembark one passenger earlier in its voyage.

The fire, which began in the engine room, spread to other compartments on board, which led to the entire ship's evacuation. Passengers and crewmembers were evacuated from the ship and taken to Pier 6 in San Juan port where emergency service personnel received them for medical evaluations.

At 10:21 a.m. Wednesday the Caribbean Fantasy ran aground approximately half a nautical mile offshore of Punta Salinas.

The Coast Guard has established a 1,000-yard safety zone around the vessel. No reports of sheening or pollution around the vessel at this time.

Multiple Coast Guard surface and air assets were committed to the response effort and worked with local Puerto Rican marine police, fire, pilot and commercial tug boats from the port, as well as the Puerto Rico Joint Forces of Action (FURA), Customs and Border Protection marine units and good Samaritans to effect the rescue.

A Unified Command comprised of federal, state and industry agencies and organizations has been established at Coast Guard Sector San Juan to manage the incident and salvage efforts of the Caribbean Fantasy.

Feature Image: A local San Juan, Puerto Rico-based tug crew use a fire hose to cool the hull of the 561-foot Caribbean Fantasy ferry vessel that caught fire earlier a mile from San Juan Harbor, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Wednesday, Aug. 17, 2016. The Caribbean Fantasy's engine room caught fire, which began to spread to other compartments forcing passengers and crew to abandon the ferry vessel. U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of Station San Juan, Puerto Rico.