

# NTSB: Poor Maintenance Practices Led to Caribbean Fantasy Fire



Poor safety culture and ineffective implementation of safety management system were identified as the probably causes of the 2016 fire aboard the RoRo vessel Caribbean Fantasy.

The vessel's main engine room was hit by fire in the morning hours of August 17, 2016, when fuel spraying from a leaking flange came in contact with a hot surface on the port main propulsion engine, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said in a report.

The fire could not be contained, so the master ordered the ship to be abandoned. At the time of the incident, the Baja Ferries-operated vessel was 2 miles northwest of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

US Coast Guard units and others helped transport all 511 passengers and crew to the port of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Several injuries, none life-threatening, occurred during firefighting and abandonment efforts.

The burning vessel drifted in the wind and grounded on the sandy bottom outside the port. Three days later, the vessel was towed into the harbor, where shore-based firefighters extinguished the last of the fire.

The accident resulted in an estimated USD 20 million in damage to the Caribbean Fantasy, which was eventually scrapped in lieu of repairs.

NTSB informed that poor maintenance practices led to an uncontained fuel spray from a blank flange at the end of the port main engine fuel supply line onto the hot exhaust manifold of the engine.

Contributing to the rapid spread of the fire were fuel and lube oil quick closing valves that were intentionally blocked open, fixed firefighting systems that were ineffective, and a structural fire boundary that failed.

Contributing to the fire and the prolonged abandonment effort was the failure of the Panama Maritime Authority and the recognized organization, RINA Services, to ensure Baja Ferries' safety management system was functional.

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