

Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department

F/V Spicy Lady Fire

March 6, 2025

Incident Overview

At 2:32 PM on March 6, 2025, the Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) received a distress call regarding a vessel fire near Pt. Gardner. The call was made by the skipper of the F/V Spicy Lady.

WVFD personnel promptly prepared their gear, obtained weather reports, and planned a flight utilizing a private floatplane owned and operated by 2 WVFD members. The aircraft, N5403E, departed the Wrangell Airport at 3:09 PM with three firefighters onboard. They carried a firefighting pump and miscellaneous firefighting equipment to facilitate an interior attack on the vessel fire.

Throughout the flight, the WVFD crew kept in communication with the crew of the F/V Spicy Lady. The crew had evacuated the vessel with the assistance of the F/V Angelette and informed WVFD that they had sealed all vents, windows, and doors to contain the fire within the focsle. The vessel was being towed by the F/V Angelette and escorted by the F/V Westerly, heading towards Warm Springs Bay on Baranof Island. However, due to a broken towline, their transit was delayed. The skipper of the F/V Westerly coordinated with the WVFD Chief to pick up the WVFD crew upon their arrival at the floatplane dock in Warm Springs Bay.

N5403E and its crew landed in Warm Springs Bay at 4:03 PM after completing a 100-mile flight. The WVFD crew unloaded their equipment and transferred it to the F/V Westerly, which then transported them to the F/V Spicy Lady. Once onboard, the fire crew established a water supply and initiated an interior attack on the fire through the rear galley door. They encountered dense smoke and extreme heat, they traced the fire's origin to the focsle, which they began to extinguish.

With the fire under control, the crew ventilated the vessel and began overhaul operations. The crew entered the engine room and shut down the main engine and generator to prevent further hazards and/or damage. WVFD personnel briefed the crew of the F/V Spicy Lady on

monitoring and extinguishing any remaining hot spots, leaving behind their firefighting pump, hose, nozzle and miscellaneous hand tools for continued use.

As they were preparing to return to Wrangell, the WVFD crew learned that a crew member of the F/V Spicy Lady had sustained burn injuries during the fire. Due to the severity of the injuries, WVFD transported the injured crew member back to Wrangell for medical treatment. N5403E departed Warm Springs Bay at 5:28 PM and arrived in Wrangell at 6:25 PM. The injured crewman was then transported by Wrangell EMS to the SEARHC Wrangell Medical Center for treatment.

A US Coast Guard Cutter was arriving on scene at approximately the same time as the WVFD crew departed. The Coast Guard Cutter Crew assisted in the further overhaul of the fire and assisted the crew of the F/V Spicy Lady extinguish any remaining hot spots.

Coast Guard Sector Southeast Alaska was given a report by the WVFD Chief upon arrival back in Wrangell, the USCG was thankful for WVFD's rapid response.

The skipper and crew of the F/V Spicy Lady are to be commended for their actions under extreme duress. Their decision to close and/or plug all windows, doors, and vents appeared to significantly slow the fire's growth, allowing responders time to arrive and extinguish the blaze. Without their swift action and response, the vessel likely would have been a total loss.

Jordan Bunes

Fire Chief

Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department