July 23, 2026 MIR-26-25

Fire aboard Fishing Vessel *GITN'R DUN*

On July 24, 2025, about 0900 local time, a fire broke out in the engine compartment aboard the fishing vessel *GITN'R DUN* while the two crewmembers aboard were hauling lobster traps in the Gulf of Maine near Mount Desert Rock, Maine (see figure 1 and figure 2).[1] The captain of the vessel attempted to put out the fire but was unsuccessful. Both crewmembers abandoned the vessel, which burned to the waterline and sank. There were no injuries, and no pollution was reported. The vessel was a total loss, with damages estimated at $717,500.

Figure 1. *GITN'R DUN* moored on May 29, 2025. (Source: US Coast Guard)

[1] (a) In this report, all times are eastern daylight time, and all miles are nautical miles (1.15 statute miles), unless otherwise noted. (b) Visit ntsb.gov to find additional information in the public docket for this NTSB investigation (case no. DCA25FM051).

Casualty Summary	
NTSB casualty category	Fire/Explosion
Location	Gulf of Maine, near Mount Desert Rock, Maine 43°57.93' N, 68°07.69' W
Date	July 24, 2025
Time	0900 eastern daylight time (coordinated universal time -4 hrs)
Persons on board	2
Injuries	None
Property damage	$717,500
Environmental damage	None
Weather	Visibility 10 mi, fair skies, winds variable 3 kts, air temperature 64°F, water temperature 50°F, morning twilight 0444, sunrise 0552
Waterway information	Ocean; depth about 50 feet

Figure 2. Area where the fire broke out aboard the fishing vessel *GITN'R DUN*, as indicated by a circled *X*. (Background source: Google Maps)

1 Factual Information

The 48-foot-long fishing vessel *GITN'R DUN* was constructed of fiberglass (fiberglass reinforced plastic) in 2016 in Nova Scotia, Canada. The boat was privately owned and used for commercial lobstering off the coast of Maine. While underway, the vessel was typically crewed by a captain and a sternman.[2]

The vessel was powered by an eight-cylinder, 900-hp diesel engine connected to a reduction gear driving a single fixed pitch propeller. The engine compartment could be accessed via a forward door near the pilothouse or a flush deck hatch located aft on the main deck. Machinery in the engine compartment included the engine's exhaust components, a hydraulic system driven by the main engine, and hydraulic pumps for deck operations. Two 300-gallon fuel tanks and one 24-gallon hydraulic tank were also located in the engine compartment. The captain estimated that about 300 to 350 gallons of fuel were aboard the vessel on the day of the fire. The engine compartment also included electrical systems, batteries arranged in 12-volt and 24-volt banks, and other combustible materials.

On July 24, 2025, about 0230, the captain and sternman got the vessel underway from its mooring in Northeast Harbor, Maine, to relocate five strings of lobster traps from their current moorings in the Gulf of Maine to different locations throughout the gulf. The two crewmembers described conditions that morning as manageable, though fog and swells were present early in the trip.

About 0445, the crew arrived at the first string of lobster traps, about 0.7 miles south of Mount Desert Rock, and began hauling in the string. Mount Desert Rock, a 3-acre, treeless island, was located about 20 miles south of Mount Desert Island, Maine (see figure 3). The island contained a lighthouse, which was built in 1839 and fully automated in 1977. The lighthouse and the island were owned by the nearby College of the Atlantic, which used the island for biological research.[3] While the *GITN'R DUN* crew was hauling in traps, students from the college were on the island conducting research. At 0601 that morning, students in the Mount Desert Rock lighthouse (also referred to as the "watch tower" by the students) noted in their daily

[2] A *sternman* is a crewmember who is positioned at the stern of a lobster boat to haul traps, remove lobsters, and re-bait and reset the traps.

[3] The island had four buildings in addition to the lighthouse: a boathouse, light tower, generator shed, and the lightkeeper's house. The lightkeeper's house had accommodations (for 20 researchers/students), two classrooms, a recreation room, kitchen and dining room, and a radio room.

watch tower sightings report that they saw the *GITN'R DUN* about 0.5 miles southeast of the island.

Figure 3. Lighthouse ("watch tower") on Mount Desert Rock. (Source: Jeremy D'Entremont, newenglandlighthouses.net)

About 0900, while hauling in the fifth string of traps, the captain smelled burning fiberglass (he told investigators he recognized the smell because he had smelled burning fiberglass earlier in his career). He asked the sternman whether he noticed the smell, but the sternman could not smell it. The captain opened the aft engine compartment hatch and observed a flame and light gray smoke in the engine room below (figure 4 shows the hatch open and a view from the open hatch into the compartment). He shut down the main engine, retrieved a dry chemical fire extinguisher from the helm area, and discharged it into the engine compartment through the open hatch.[4] He told investigators he believed there was a brief reduction in visible flame after discharging the fire extinguisher.

[4] According to a survey conducted in 2022, the vessel was equipped with four 3-pound dry chemical fire extinguishers and one 15-pound dry chemical fire extinguisher.

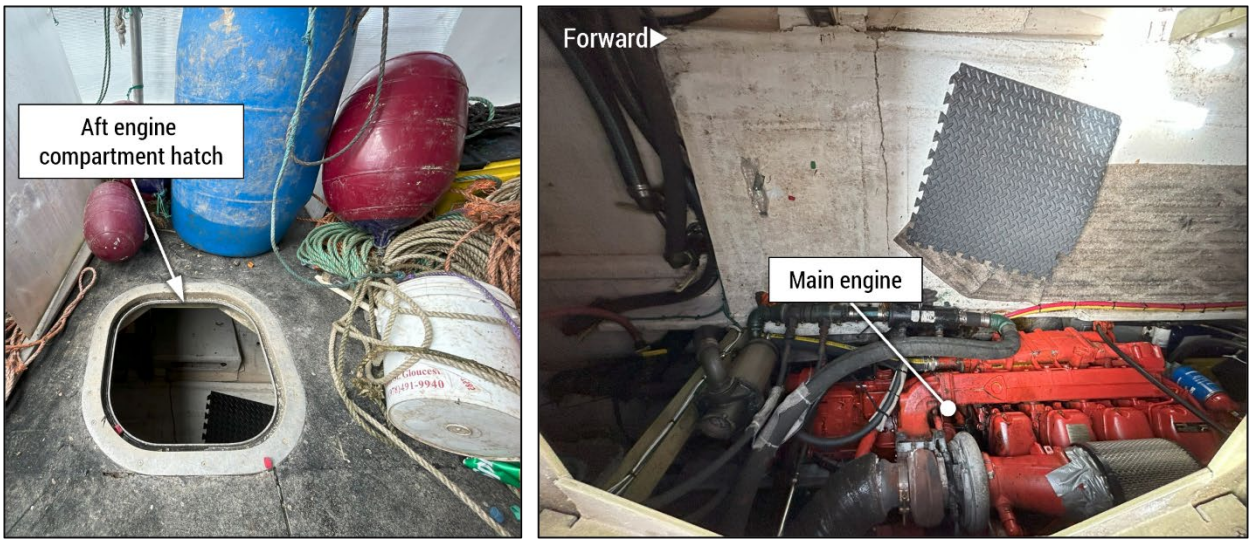

Figure 4. *Left to right*: Aft engine compartment hatch (open), and view of engine compartment looking down through the open hatch, both in May 2025, before the fire. (Background source: Coast Guard)

The captain retrieved a second fire extinguisher from the entrance to the berthing space. He stated that, when he returned to the aft hatch, the fire had significantly intensified, filling the engine compartment with large flames and heavy smoke. He discharged the second fire extinguisher into the engine compartment and then closed the hatch to try and smother the fire.

About 0904, he made a distress call to the US Coast Guard on VHF radio channel 16 and stated that he had a fire and that two crewmembers were aboard. He provided his position over the radio. Shortly afterward, fire and smoke spread from the engine compartment up to the berthing space and the main deck. As a result, the captain was unable to communicate further by radio, and neither crewmember was able to access the berthing space forward of the engine hatch where the vessel's five immersion (survival) suits and five lifejackets were stored.

About this time, two watchstanders in the Mount Desert Rock watch tower observed white smoke and flames in the cabin of the *GITN'R DUN* while the vessel was about 0.25 miles southeast of the island (see figure 5). The watchstanders reported that both crewmembers were "moving between the bow and the stern as the fire allowed." The Mount Desert Rock watchstanders switched the VHF handheld to channel 16. About 0905, they heard communications between the *GITN'R DUN*, the Canadian Coast Guard in Halifax, Canada, and another fishing vessel in the area. About 0908, they contacted the US Coast Guard to report the fire and that the two *GITN'R DUN* crewmembers were on the bow of the vessel. The Mount Desert Rock watchstanders advised the US Coast Guard that they were able to assist by launching a tender.

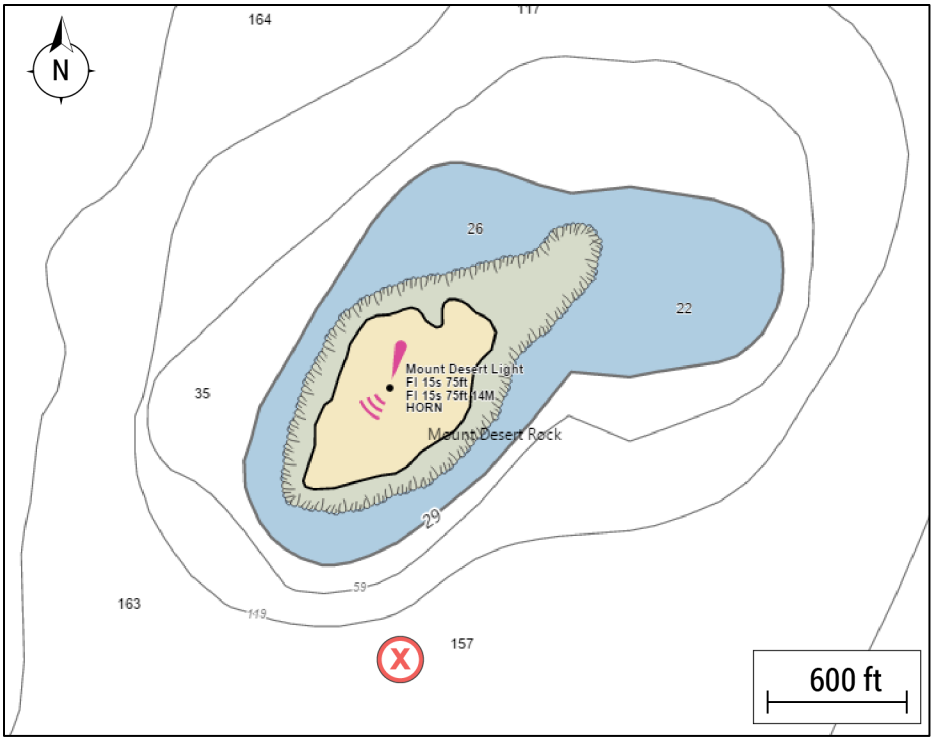

Figure 5. Location where the fire broke out aboard the *GITN'R' DUN*, as indicated by a circled *X,* relative to Mount Desert Rock and the Mount Desert watch tower (light). (Background source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Coast Survey)

The captain and the sternman moved to the roof of the pilothouse where the four-person inflatable liferaft and emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) were mounted. They deployed the inflatable liferaft, and the captain activated the EPIRB. According to the captain, the liferaft's painter line appeared to be shorter than expected, which he believed prevented proper standoff from the vessel.[5] Both crewmembers jumped off the *GITN'R DUN* into the liferaft in the water alongside the burning vessel.

Once the crewmembers were in the liferaft, which was deployed on the windward side of the vessel, the wind blew the liferaft into the burning vessel, which caused the liferaft canopy to catch fire and melt. As the liferaft deflated and began to sink, both crewmembers abandoned the burning liferaft into the 50°F water without lifejackets or immersion suits.

[5] On an inflatable liferaft, the *painter* is a line that attaches the raft to the vessel, and, when pulled, activates the raft's inflation and helps keep the raft near the vessel. According to manufacturer's data for the liferaft model aboard *GITN'R DUN*, the painter length was 30 meters (98 feet).

About 0912, Mount Desert Rock watchstanders noted that the smoke was turning heavy and black, and the fire was spreading (see figure 6). Three students launched a 13-foot-long rigid inflatable boat from the northern cove of the island and headed toward the burning *GITN'R DUN*.

Figure 6. Fire aboard the fishing vessel *GITN'R DUN*. *From top*: Views of the vessel's port side and starboard side. (Source: Coast Guard)

As the crewmembers were treading water, the sternman became entangled in the sinking liferaft and got pulled underwater. The captain was able to free the sternman, and, together, they swam to the open stern of the *GITN'R DUN* to look for any floating items to hang on to. The captain grabbed a mooring-type buoy and a lobster crate. He put the buoy and EPIRB in the lobster crate, and both crewmembers held onto the crate and a rope that was still attached to the *GITN'R DUN*. Once the rope burned and parted, they held onto the crate and started to swim to the Mount Desert Rock shore.

About 0930, the rigid inflatable boat from Mount Desert Rock approached the two crewmembers in the water. The boat crew brought the two *GITN'R DUN* crewmembers aboard the boat and transported them to the Mount Desert Rock boat ramp. About 0932, they notified the US Coast Guard that the crewmembers had been recovered. Mount Desert Rock watchstanders estimated the two crewmembers were in the water for about 8 to 10 minutes.

At 1020, a US Coast Guard rescue boat arrived at the Mount Desert Rock boat dock, picked up the crewmembers, and brought them back to Coast Guard Station Southwest Harbor.

After the crew abandoned the *GITN'R DUN*, the vessel continued to burn. It drifted toward the rocky shoreline on the east side of Mount Desert Rock, and waves battered the hull into the rocks and caused the hull to break up. The vessel burned to the waterline and subsequently sank. The vessel was declared a total loss. The vessel was not salvaged and was unable to be accessed and examined by investigators.

The captain did not report injuries and did not seek hospital treatment. The sternman sought a medical evaluation following the casualty and was treated and released.

The captain reported that the vessel had undergone maintenance and repair work in the months before the casualty, including a new transmission/gear installation and hydraulic system servicing during the winter. The vessel had run aground in May 2025 and had been hauled out of the water for repairs, returning to service about 2 weeks before the fire. According to the captain, the vessel had been operating normally during this period, and no abnormalities were noted during daily checks, including the morning of the fire. He reported no known leaks in the fuel or hydraulic systems or from the exhaust components on the day of the fire, and that there were no engine or machinery alarms received before the fire broke out.

A smoke detector located forward near the berthing area in the forward part of the vessel activated during the event, after the fire had escalated. The vessel's engine

compartment did not have a smoke or fire detection system or fixed fire extinguishing system installed, nor were the engine compartment ventilation openings equipped with dampers or closures (a smoke/fire detection system, a extinguishing system, and dampers were not required).

The captain had recently attended a Commercial Vessel Fisherman Drill Instructor training class. These classes typically covered procedures for leading and documenting US Coast Guard-required emergency drills. The sternman had firefighting experience from a previous job.

After the fire, the captain told investigators he would consider implementing the following possible safety improvements on his next fishing vessel:

- Installing an engine compartment camera system, a dedicated fire detection system, a fixed fire extinguishing system, and improved ventilation control;
- Having a longer painter line and improved staging for the liferaft;
- Providing crewmembers with personal locator beacons; and
- Having more accessible immersion suit storage locations.

2 Analysis

On July 24, 2025, a fire broke out in the engine compartment aboard the fishing vessel *GITN'R DUN* while the crew was hauling lobster traps near Mount Desert Rock, Maine. The fire resulted in the total loss of the vessel.

After smelling burning fiberglass, the captain discovered flames and light gray smoke in the engine compartment, aft on the vessel. The engine compartment contained multiple potential heat and ignition sources, including main engine exhaust components, high pressure hydraulic equipment that was operational at the time of the fire, electrical systems, batteries, and combustible materials. However, because the *GITN'R DUN* burned to the waterline, subsequently sank, and was not salvaged, investigators were unable to access and inspect the vessel to determine the exact ignition source.

Before the captain detected the smell of burning fiberglass, there were no signs of a fire. The captain stated that the vessel was operating normally and there were no indications of issues with the vessel's engine or other machinery. No alarms were reported before the captain discovered the fire. There was no fire detection in the engine compartment, nor was there required to be. Although the *GITN'R DUN* was equipped with a smoke detector, it was located forward at the entrance to the berthing area on the vessel (the engine compartment was aft). The smoke detector activated during the fire, but only after the fire had escalated. The absence of engine compartment fire detection likely delayed recognition of the fire in its incipient stage, when it would have been more manageable to extinguish with the available fire extinguishers.

Portable fire extinguishers were the only means of onboard firefighting available to the crewmembers. The captain discharged two handheld extinguishers through the aft engine compartment hatch, but the fire continued to grow, rapidly escalating and engulfing the engine compartment in the time it took the captain to retrieve the second fire extinguisher. The vessel was not equipped with a fixed fire extinguishing system, nor was it required to be. The vessel also lacked means to seal ventilation openings in the engine compartment, such as steel dampers or ventilation louvers in the air intake ducting. Without a fixed fire extinguishing system capable of flooding the engine compartment, and without dampers or closures to fully seal ventilation openings, oxygen continued to enter the engine compartment and feed the fire. The fire grew and spread, ultimately becoming too intense to be suppressed using the handheld fire extinguishers on board.

Once fire and smoke had engulfed the engine compartment and spread into the berthing space, the two crewmembers were unable to access their immersion

suits and lifejackets as fire blocked the crewmembers' path to their storage area. The captain quickly made a mayday call, activated the EPIRB, and abandoned the vessel with the sternman into the liferaft in a timely manner. However, deployment of the liferaft on the windward side of the vessel prevented the crew from positioning it at a safe distance from the burning vessel. As a result, the heat of the fire ignited the liferaft's canopy, causing it to sink and forcing the crewmembers into the water without any survival gear.

The estimated water temperature of 50°F was within a range where hypothermia was a significant survival factor.[6] In water that temperature, cold incapacitation—where the use of hands, arms, and legs becomes more difficult—can occur within 10 minutes and possibly result in swimming failure or drowning.[7] Without lifejackets or immersion suits, the *GITN'R DUN* crew's survival was dependent on a short duration of water exposure and their ability to remain afloat. A nearby lobster crate provided the crew with improvised flotation, temporarily mitigating the risk of swimming failure. Additionally, timely rescue by the nearby college students limited the crew's exposure to the cold water to only a few minutes. Had these factors not aligned for the two crewmembers, the results could have been deadly.

[6] Hypothermia can occur in any water temperature below 70°F. See Centers for Disease Control, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2026, "Cold-related Illnesses in Workers," https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/cold-stress/about/related-illness.html.

[7] Centers for Disease Control, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2024, "Safety Guidelines: Falls Overboard," https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fishing/falls-overboard/index.html.

3 Conclusions

3.1 Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the fire aboard the fishing vessel *GITN'R DUN* was an undetermined engine compartment ignition source that resulted in a rapidly developing fire, which was too intense to be suppressed using the handheld fire extinguishers on board.

Vessel Particulars

Vessel	*GITN'R DUN*
NTSB vessel group	Fishing (Fishing vessel)
Owner/operator	Private Owner
Flag	United States
Port of registry	Bar Harbor, Maine
Year built	2016
Official number	ME20TCC (Maine State ID)
IMO number	N/A
Classification society	N/A
Length (overall)	48.0 ft (14.6 m)
Breadth (max.)	18.8 ft (5.7 m)
Draft (casualty)	4.5 ft (1.4 m)
Tonnage	25 GT
Engine power; manufacturer	1 × 900 hp (671 kW); Scania DI16 083M diesel engine

NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from **Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment Belfast** throughout this investigation.