

U.S. NEWS

Cargo ship carrying burning lithium-ion batteries kept offshore of Alaska port

The Coast Guard said it diverted the ship to Dutch Harbor, one of the country's busiest fishing ports, in the Aleutian Islands community of Unalaska.



— A fire was reported in a hold of the cargo vessel Genius Star XI, which is being kept 2 miles offshore of an Alaska port as a precaution while efforts are undertaken to extinguish the flames.

Lt.Cmdr. Michael Salerno / U.S. Coast Guard via AP

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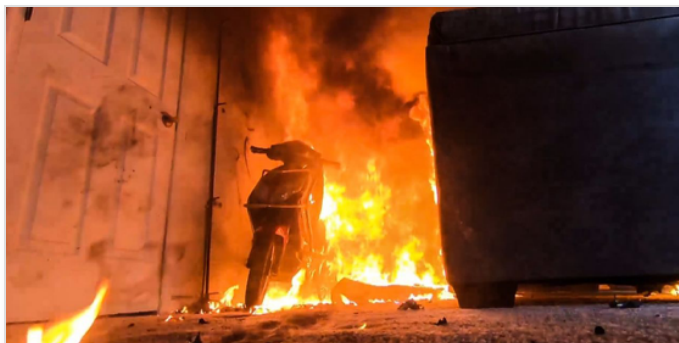
ANCHORAGE, Alaska – A [large cargo ship](#)

[with a fire in its hold](#) is being kept 2 miles offshore of an Alaska port as a precaution while efforts are undertaken to extinguish the flames, the U.S. Coast Guard said Saturday.

There were no injuries to the 19 crew members aboard the Genius Star XI, which was carrying a load of [lithium-ion batteries](#) across the Pacific Ocean, from Vietnam to San Diego, the [guard's Alaska district](#) said in a release.

The fire started on Christmas Day in cargo hold No. 1, a spokesperson for ship owner [Wisdom Marine Group](#) said in a statement. The crew released carbon dioxide into the hold and sealed it over concerns of an explosion.

Ship's personnel alerted the Coast Guard early Thursday morning about the fire. The Coast Guard said it diverted the 410-foot cargo ship to Dutch Harbor, one of the nation's busiest fishing ports located in Unalaska, an Aleutian Islands community about 800 miles southwest of Anchorage.

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The ship arrived Friday, but an order preventing the Genius Star XI from going close to shore was issued to “mitigate risks associated with burning lithium-ion batteries or toxic gasses produced by the fire,” Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Mike Salerno said in an email to The Associated Press.

“The city’s primary concern is protecting the health and safety of our community members, the environment, fisheries and commerce,” Unalaska acting city manager Marjie Veeder said in a statement.

Veeder said the city’s emergency operations center “is acting on behalf of the community and advocating our position to protect our community. We are actively monitoring the situation.”

There is danger associated with any vessel fire, prompting the Coast Guard to issue another safety measure besides preventing the ship from getting closer than 2 miles to shore.

"The safety of Unalaska residents and the surrounding communities is a top priority

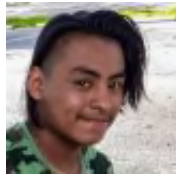
for us, so as a precaution we are keeping a one-mile safety zone around the vessel,” Salerno said.

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The owners said there has been no oil leaks associated with the incident.


A team of marine firefighting experts late Friday conducted an assessment of the ship and found no signs of structural deformation or blistering outside of the cargo hold, the Coast Guard said.

That team remains on board the ship to evaluate the situation, Salerno said.

An expert hired by the Taipei, Taiwan-based Wisdom Marine Group “is working diligently to create contingency plans, arrange for a firefighting team, and ensure the necessary equipment is in place,” the

group said in a statement.

The Coast Guard will investigate the cause of the fire.

The Genius Star XI left Vietnam on Dec. 10 en route to Dutch Harbor, according to the [Marine Traffic website](#). The ship with a carrying capacity of more than 13,000 tons sails under the flag of Panama. 

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