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Ship on Fire Carrying Porsches, Bentleys, VWs Included Many EVs: Report

The salvage crew working on the burning ship now says electric-vehicle batteries are part of the reason it is still aflame after several days, the Wall Street Journal is reporting.



BY [SEBASTIAN BLANCO](#) UPDATED: FEB 22, 2022

- The ship that [caught fire Wednesday](#) with around 4000 vehicles on board is still ablaze and adrift in the Atlantic Ocean today.
- Firefighters are on their way to the ship, which might—repeat, might—be challenging to put out because of some electric vehicles on board. We have no idea yet what caused the fire.
- Whatever caused the blaze, the kinds of roll-on-roll-off (RORO) ferries that can transport thousands of cars at once are at high risk for total loss once a fire starts on board.

UPDATE 2/22/22: According to an [Associated Press report](#), the fire has begun to "subside" on board the

Felicity Ace today after burning for six days, thanks in part to the efforts of two tugboats loaded with firefighting equipment that have been hosing down the ship's hull. The ship will next be towed to land, likely to the Bahamas.

UPDATE 2/21/22: *The [Wall Street Journal](#) has spoken with a spokesperson for the salvage crew working on the burning cargo ship, who confirmed that "part of the fire is the batteries [in electric vehicles on board] that are still burning." The paper said that according to Portuguese navy officials and salvage workers who have seen a cargo manifest, "it is clear that many of the cars on board are electric vehicles." The fire, which started on Wednesday, has continued to burn into the weekend.*

The *Felicity Ace*, the cargo ship that is still on fire in the Atlantic Ocean, does have thousands of new vehicles from the Volkswagen Group on board, but the impact of any electric vehicles is not yet known.

To recap, the car carrier was on the way from Europe to the U.S. with a load of new vehicles on board when it caught fire Wednesday near the Azores. All 22 crew members were rescued, and the ship was left adrift and burning. There were reports that the ship would be towed to the Azores, but the 650-foot-long ship is too big for the port of Horta there. The ship is likely to be towed back to Europe or to the Bahamas, Captain Joao Mendes Cabecas from Port of Horta told [Reuters](#).



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The Felicity Ace, a cargo ship carrying hundreds of vehicles including Porsches bound for the U.S., was left adrift in the mid-Atlantic following a fire [#WSJWhatsNow](#)



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Firefighting crews and salvage teams are on their way to deal with the massive fire, which could be more difficult to get under control with EV batteries on

board. There is no confirmation yet that this is the case, but it is likely that EVs were part of the cargo. Both Porsche and VW import some vehicles from Europe to the U.S., but as VW only imports the [GTI](#), [Golf R](#), and [ID.4](#) from Europe, the automaker most likely to be affected is Porsche, which imports the [Taycan](#) from the plant in Zuffenhausen, Germany. A Porsche spokesperson told *Car and Driver*, "It is too early to speculate on the cause of the incident."

Lamborghini declined to give a comment to *C/D*, but a VW spokesperson told us that the U.S. arm doesn't know much more about the situation on the ship other than what's available in media reports. [Bloomberg](#), which managed to get access to an internal email from Volkswagen AG's U.S. operations, reported there were 3965 vehicles on board. Around 100 of the vehicles are apparently VW models destined for the U.S.

Porsche spokesperson Luke Vandezande told Bloomberg that the automaker estimates it had around 1100 vehicles on the *Felicity Ace*, and 189 Bentleys have also been confirmed as being part of the cargo list.

The software company Skytek issued a short report today that claims the estimated market value of the *Felicity Ace* is \$24.5 million, while the total value of the 3965 vehicles could be over \$500 million.

Cargo vessel fires were the number three cause of shipping losses over the past decade, and there were 10 "total loss" cargo ship fires in 2020, according to

Reinsurance News. While, overall, the shipping industry has improved its safety record in the past 10 years, roll-on-roll-off (RORO) ferries are at high risk for fire.

"To facilitate carriage of automobiles the internal spaces are not divided into separate sections like other cargo ships," said Rahul Khanna, global head of marine risk consulting at Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty, told [Reinsurance News](#). "The lack of internal bulkheads can have an adverse impact on fire safety and a small fire on one vehicle or battery can grow out of control very quickly. Vehicles are not easily accessible once loading has been completed."



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Sebastian Blanco has been writing about electric vehicles, hybrids, and hydrogen cars since 2006. His articles and car reviews have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Automotive News*, Reuters, SAE, Autoblog, InsideEVs, Trucks.com, Car Talk, and other outlets. Hi...

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