Healy Suffers Fire, Propulsion Failure En Route to Arctic



The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy in 2018. The Healy suffered a fire in one of its main propulsion motors on Aug. 18 while underway for the Arctic. U.S. COAST GUARD

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy suffered a fire in one of the ship's main propulsion motors on Aug. 18 while underway for operations in the Arctic, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Aug. 25 release. No injuries were reported.

The Healy was 60 nautical miles off of Seward, Alaska, en route to the Arctic when an electrical fire was reported at 9:30 p.m. A fire team disconnected the affected motor, and the fire was confirmed extinguished by 9:56 p.m. The cause of the fire is unknown.

The propulsion motors are critical equipment that use the power generated by the ship's main diesel engines to spin the shaft and propeller. This design protects the engines from variations in shaft speeds inherent to ice operations.

Due to the fire, Healy's starboard propulsion motor and shaft are no longer operational, and the ship is headed back to its homeport in Seattle for further inspection and repairs.

Prior to the fire, the Healy completed a 26-day patrol in support of Operation Arctic Shield, demonstrating U.S. presence and influence in the Bering Sea, along the U.S.-Russian Maritime Boundary Line, and in the Arctic.

On Aug. 15, the Healy was in Seward and embarked 11 scientists before departing on Aug. 18 to ensure national security and

conduct science operations in the Arctic. As a result of the fire, all Arctic operations have been cancelled.

“I commend the crew of the Healy for their quick actions to safely combat the fire,” said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, the Pacific Area commander. “This casualty, however, means that the United States is limited in icebreaking capability until the Healy can be repaired, and it highlights the nation’s critical need for polar security cutters.”

In April 2019, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard awarded a contract to VT Halter Marine, of Pascagoula, Mississippi, for the detail design and construction of the polar security cutter. The initial award includes nonrecurring engineering, detail design and construction of the first PSC and has options for the construction of two additional hulls. Construction of the first PSC is scheduled to begin in early 2021 with delivery in 2024. The president’s fiscal year 2021 budget requests full funding for the construction of a second PSC.