

Statement of [REDACTED] concerning the response to the D/V CONCEPTION fire.

I received a call from Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach Command Center (LA/LB CC) regarding a response to report of a medical emergency on the North side of Santa Cruz Island. I made a pipe to get the SAR crew up and mustered in our Station Operations Center. I coordinated with the Station Officer of the Day (STA OOD) BM3 [REDACTED] to request Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) medical response from Station 53 via our VCFD radio. After the dispatch, and while planning our response to the medical incident, I overheard a mayday call on VHF CH 16 of a dive vessel reporting that they were on fire IVO Platt's harbor on Santa Cruz Island. The captain reported that the vessel was fully engulfed and that he had over 30 people trapped on board. BM3 [REDACTED] made the decision to ready a second crew and launch both 45' RB-Ms. I waited with a crew for the arrival of Medic Engine 53 (ME53) and he launched with a crew aboard 45643. Once ME53 arrived, I briefed the Captain of ME53 (Cap53) that we had a vessel on fire and we were transitioning our response. He contacted VCFD Fire Communications Center (FCC) to request a second engine company respond to man Boat 15, a fire boat stationed at Channel Islands Harbor Patrol. I launched with the ME53 crew. Arriving on scene shortly after 45643, I observed the vessel fully involved in fire. 45643 began fire suppression work but quickly abandoned efforts on the advice of Cap53. I also observed Coast Guard helo 6540 arrive on scene about the same time as my vessel. I overheard the good Samaritan vessel GRAPE ESCAPE (originally reported as GREAT ESCAPE) call 6540 reporting a crew member with a fractured leg. I contacted the vessel and had them signal their position to me by blinking their navigation lights. I maneuvered to their position and transferred 1 VCFD FF paramedic and 1 VCFD EMT to assess the crew member. After assessment, the paramedic recommended not transferring the patient. Based on his stable condition and on consultation with the paramedic, I recommended GRAPE ESCAPE would return to Channel Islands Harbor for transfer to waiting EMS. Around this time, I was designated as On Scene Coordinator (OSC). I began coordinating the efforts of Santa Barbara Harbor Patrol Boat 3 (Boat 3), CG 45643 (643) and the good sam GRAPE ESCAPE. I requested, and was granted, permission from LA/LB CC to embark the Captain of the CONCEPTION aboard my boat at his expressed desire to remain on scene with his boat. Upon a report from GRAPE ESCAPE personnel that the CONCEPTION dingy was taking on water, I directed 643 to make contact and evaluate. Upon inspection, the 643 reported that the dingy was not taking on water. The dingy eventually made their way to the GRAPE ESCAPE and rendezvoused with their other crew members. 4 crew and the dingy were transported to CIH by GRAPE ESCAPE. Upon GRAPE ESCAPE's departure, I shifted my attention to coordination of fire suppression with the hope of embarking fire personnel to conduct a search for any survivors as well as conducting searches of the shore line for any people may have escaped. Around this time Ventura County Boat 15 (Boat 15) arrived on scene with personnel from VCFD Station 54. Boat 3 and Boat 15 took turns attempting to extinguish the flames. Also arriving on scene was Retriever II, a TowBoatUS Ventura vessel. As both fire boats worked to extinguish the fire, the CONCEPTION began drifting toward shore and a large rock/shoal having broken free of her anchor due to the fire. The proximity to shoal water prevented the fire boats from taking action and hampered the response efforts. Retriever II offered to use their grapnel and chain to hook the boat and tow it out to "good water" so that rescue efforts could continue. Once CONCEPTION was back in good water, further efforts to extinguish the flames were successful. However, reflashes kept happening and both fire boats worked together to keep the flames at bay. I coordinated with Cap53 for additional AFFF supply to be brought out by Ventura Harbor Patrol Boat 1 (Boat 1) with a crew from VCFD Station 26. I tasked 643 with conducting a shore line search ½ mile east and west of the current position to look for any possible survivors. Once on scene, Boat 1 experienced an engine casualty that caused them to anchor. I came along side Boat 1 and transferred the crew from Station 26 along with about 25 gallons of AFFF in the event either were needed. Boat 1 remained anchored. As the morning progressed, the air crew from Coast Guard Air Station San Diego aboard a MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter, tail number 6014 (6014) arrived on scene. 643 returned from their search and reported negative results (NEG RES). I relayed the findings to Sector LA/LB CC and stated my intention to conduct another search shortly as the sun was beginning to rise. 643 reported that they felt they had enough light for an effective search and as such began another shore line search. I also tasked 6014 with a shore line search focusing on areas not easily seen from the water (coves and around corners). Both 6014 and 643 reported NEG RES upon completion of their sorties. Retriever II contacted Sector LA/LB CC to coordinate with NOAA and National Parks personnel an acceptable area to allow the CONCEPTION to sink (if the situation required_ so as to minimize the environmental impact but also allow for future dive operations. Sector LA/LB CC reported that NOAA stated that any area that was

shallow enough to dive was an acceptable location based on the situation. As the situation had stabilized, I requested and received permission for 643 to begin a tow of Boat 1 back to Ventura Harbor. Around this time, I began discussions with Cap53 about the dewatering capabilities of the assets on scene. Shortly after, I observed the stern of the CONCEPTION begin to go below the water and begin sinking. I quickly tasked 643 with dropping tow and having Boat 1 re-anchor, as I felt the deck space and capabilities of the RB-M may be needed if any bodies began to float. As the CONCEPTION sank, Retriever II maneuvered the CONCEPTION as close to the island as possible and allowed it to sink in about 64 feet of water and about 10 yards from the island. In the time immediately following the sinking, a small debris field was observed. I tasked Boat 3 with investigating for pollution and any bodies. No sheen nor bodies were present. Retriever II was able to safely disconnect their tow line and reported that they would be willing and able to tow Boat 1 back to Ventura Harbor when the time came. As the situation stabilized and progressed, I requested permission from Sector LA/LB CC to start releasing assets. I was eventually told to RTB by Station CI watch. As I departed the scene, I notified Sector LA/LB CC and they transferred my OSC duties to 643. While enroute back to CIH, I overheard that crews had discovered multiple bodies and a sheen from the vessel. I observed CGC NARWHAL enroute to the scene and diverted to drop my 2 body bags so they could take them and utilize them if needed. I returned to STA CI and turned 739 over to a relief crew. I entered the station and began helping with any efforts needed.

This statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and memory.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] BM2, USCG