

## WHAT IGNITED THE FIRE ON DIVE BOAT?

The Conception burned so quickly that its passengers had no chance. Its former owner has a theory.

By HANNAH FRY,  
KIM CHRISTENSEN,  
SUSANNE ROSE  
AND COLLEEN SHALBY

One of the crew members aboard the dive boat Conception hadn't been asleep long when a noise jolted him awake.

He swung open the door of the wheelhouse—the top level of the 75-foot boat, located just above the galley—and was greeted by flames.

As the fire raged in the pre-dawn hours of Labor Day, the vessel's captain made a frantic mayday call to the Coast Guard. Then he and four crew members jumped from the wheelhouse and climbed into a dinghy to get help from the Grape Escape, a fishing boat anchored nearby off Santa Cruz Island.

Once aboard, the crew member who had been jolted awake shook as he recounted the horrific story to Grape Escape owner Shirley Hansen. His theory, Hansen said, was that the fire started in the galley, where cellphones and cameras had been plugged in to charge overnight.

"The impression I got was that the fire was already too big to do anything."  
[See Boat fire, A9]



Clipped By:

**boebert**

Sat, Feb 12, 2022