Western Venture Likely Sunk After Fire

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Rosemarie Alexander/KTOO and Jay Barrett/KMXT

The U.S. Coast Guard says a 59-foot longliner that burned Sunday in the Bering Sea has likely sunk.

A Jayhawk helicopter crew Monday flew over the area where the Western Venture was last seen, about 70 miles west of Adak, according to Coast Guard spokeswoman Sara Mooers in Kodiak.

“We had good search conditions with good visibility and did not locate the vessel, so we presume it has likely sunk.

She says the Coast Guard is working with the Western Venture’s owner to determine the cause of the fire.

The fuel tanks held up to 43-hundred gallons, but Mooers says they weren’t full.

“The updated figure for the fuel aboard is 2-thousand gallons of diesel but it is unknown if any of that was consumed by the fire. It’s likely it was.”

The Western Venture fishermen were uninjured and picked up by the fishing vessel Aleutian Beauty, which responded to a Coast Guard urgent marine broadcast. The Aleutian Beauty took the fishermen to Adak.

Mooers calls the case an excellent example of a fishing crew that was prepared for emergency.

“They had their Epirb and they used it. They had their survival equipment and they used it, which allowed them to abandoned ship to their life raft safely and stay alive until rescuers could arrive on scene.

She says the burning ship was quite far out in the Bering Sea, away from any land mass and the vessel is now likely several hundred feet below the water’s surface.