



Truck mishap, boat breakdown again disrupt Steamship Authority service to the Islands



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2018

To replace a sidelined ferry, the agency deployed another boat, called the M/V Martha's Vineyard, though officials noted that the fill-in boat was running behind schedule.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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Tuesday was another chaotic day for the Steamship Authority, which has struggled of late to provide reliable ferry service to and from Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

First, a truck driving off one of the authority's boats struck and damaged cables at one of its ports, causing delays.

Then, just as repairs to the cables were wrapping up, that same boat suffered a mechanical breakdown, leading to trip cancellations.

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In a series of alerts Tuesday, the authority said the mishap with the truck happened when a vessel called the M/V Governor was unloading at one of the two spots in Woods Hole where boats can dock, after having arrived at about 7:15 a.m.

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The damaged cables, which support the bridge that carries vehicles to and from the boat, caused the boat to leave 45 minutes late for its next trip, the alerts said. That left the authority with only one spot for boats to dock in Woods Hole, causing delays for other trips.

An update posted to the authority's website around 10:30 a.m. said the cables had been repaired, signaling the boat would return to service and the docking spot would reopen.

But at around the same time, that boat suffered a mechanical issue. A "low fuel pressure alarm" went off. For several hours, as crews replaced the boat's fuel pump, the boat and the docking spot it occupied in Woods Hole remained out of commission.

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To replace that sidelined ferry, the agency deployed another boat, the M/V Martha's Vineyard, though officials noted the fill-in boat ran behind schedule.

Shortly before 4 p.m., the authority announced that repairs to the M/V Governor were finished, and the Coast Guard had cleared it to return to service. The authority said it expected all trips to be back on schedule at 5 p.m.

Tuesday's problems were just the latest. The authority has faced sharp criticism in recent months for a [slew of trip cancellations and delays](#) — many attributed to mechanical failures — as well as for poor communication.

It has [blamed](#) some of the problems on an outside contractor that recently serviced three of the troubled boats, while acknowledging its own shortcomings and vowing to soon [hire a consultant](#) to help it look for ways to improve.

Tuesday wasn't the first time a truck has struggled to exit a Steamship boat. Last month, a tractor-trailer got stuck when driving off the M/V Martha's Vineyard at Woods Hole, prompting delays, [according to media reports](#).

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The authority's Woods Hole terminal is in the midst of a [major overhaul](#) that includes adding a third slip.

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