



Bruins 3, Penguins 4, Final

Vineyard-to-Falmouth ferry returns to port after steering trouble with 78 aboard

By **Danny McDonald** Globe Staff, Updated December 23, 2019, 7:57 p.m.

A ferry headed to Woods Hole in Falmouth from Martha's Vineyard Monday evening lost some of its steering capabilities with 78 passengers aboard, according to a spokesman for the quasi-public agency that oversees such vessels.

The Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority said in a statement that during a trip from Vineyard Haven to Woods Hole, the M/V Katama encountered steering problems shortly after 6:05 p.m., just off the coast near Nobska Light.

According to the authority, the boat maintained its power, propulsion, and the use of its bow thrusters — which aid in maneuvering. No injuries were reported.

“The crew was able to safely maneuver the vessel to a safe location and keep its position without having to drop anchor,” said the authority in a statement. “At no time were the customers or crew in danger.”

Two tugboats escorted the vessel back to port, arriving at the dock at Vineyard Haven at about 8:15 p.m., according to an authority statement.

There were 78 passengers, seven crew members, and 29 vehicles aboard, officials said. All the passengers who wished to continue to Woods Hole boarded the M/V Martha Vineyard once the Katama made it back to port. That vessel arrived at its destination in Falmouth at about 9:15 p.m. The authority, in a statement, thanked the passengers for their patience.

The Katama's 5:30 a.m. Tuesday trip off the island has been cancelled. The authority made arrangements for the M/V Gay Head to run Tuesday in place of the Katama starting with the 6:30 a.m. trip to Vineyard Haven. According to the authority, customers should expect delays Tuesday morning "due to the availability of only one slip in Vineyard Haven."

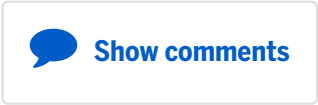
Monday's incident occurred [a little more than a week after a Steamship Authority ferry](#) headed to Vineyard Haven from Woods Hole was unexpectedly cancelled, leaving some passengers stranded. That ferry lost main power around 9:30 p.m. on Dec. 15.

The Steamship Authority has been criticized in recent years after many canceled trips were caused by mechanical problems that troubled a large swath of its fleet. [Last year](#), a scathing report found that the authority was badly understaffed, suffered from a "penny-pinching" mentality, and was hampered by sparring internal factions.

[During the first four months of 2018](#), mechanical problems prompted the authority to cancel about 550 ferry trips between the Vineyard and Falmouth, an unprecedented total about 15 times the yearly average.

Matt Rocheleau of Globe staff contributed to this report.

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