

Massive Explosion Rocks Cargo Ship Near Site of Downed Baltimore Bridge

A massive explosion erupted aboard a cargo ship in Baltimore's harbor, near the site of the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse, officials said Monday.

The vessel, identified as the W-Sapphire by CBS News, is a 751-foot bulk carrier registered in Liberia.

It had 23 crew members and two pilots on board, none of whom were injured.

NEW – Cargo ship explodes near Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland.

– (@disclosetv) August 19, 2025

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The ship was hauling coal and leaving the harbor when an explosion occurred, according to officials in the city.

Videos show the dramatic moment flames engulfed the vessel, sending smoke billowing into the sky.

The U.S. Coast Guard said it was responding to reports of the explosion in a statement.

"The U.S. Coast Guard and partners are responding to reports of an explosion aboard the merchant vessel W-Sapphire while it was outbound from Baltimore Harbor, Monday," the statement read.



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As of Tuesday morning, the Fort McHenry Federal Channel remained closed.

Port officials said the Coast Guard would decide when the channel can reopen.

A source said the ship was able to sail unassisted to port to anchor.

Jay Steinmetz and his son, Sam Steinmetz, were sailing in the Patapsco River when they heard the blast.

"We were out sailing, and we heard a really loud explosion," Jay Steinmetz told CBS News. "We turned around, and there was a 200-foot plume of smoke. We are like, 'Holy crap.' Within two or five minutes, we hear, 'Mayday, mayday.'"

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His son added, "We thought it was them doing demolition on the Key Bridge. We had just passed under the bridge, and the Sapphire ship had passed right by us. It was right next to the bridge, where it happened."

"You are not sure how many people are on that boat entirely, but it was a big explosion and there was a huge cloud of smoke," he continued.

The pair said they wanted to help, but saw other vessels racing toward the cargo ship.

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In July, crews began demolition on the remaining portions of

the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

The bridge collapsed in March 2024 after the container ship Dali, suffering electrical failures, struck a pier and killed six workers.

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