The recent tragedy and loss of life on the commercial dive vessel *Conception* is a grave reminder of the hazards of onboard fire. This incident is particularly relevant because the *Conception* was similar in size, mission, and configuration to a number of Class III boats and SRVs in the NOAA fleet. While the incident is still under investigation, there are a number of contributing factors that deserve our immediate attention. This tragedy focusses on the complexities of larger boats in the fleet, but this should be a time to revisit potential fire hazards and established response procedures on all NOAA small boats. The Small Boat Safety Board and Program Office are requiring VOCs immediately:

On all vessels:

- Reduce potential fire hazards through awareness, the use of approved devices and monitoring of electrical devices. Extensive use of power strips, extension cords and unsupervised charging of lithium-ion batteries must be limited.
- Ensure all fire detection systems and alarms are in good serviceable condition and are currently certified and tested as required.
- Verify all fixed gas fire suppression systems have been serviced (within 1 year from the last service date) and in good serviceable condition.
- Verify all required portable fire extinguishers are on station, charge levels are in good range and have been inspected / serviced (within 1 year from the last service date).
- Ensure documentation is completed for all required safety equipment certifications and tests, and maintenance on safety equipment.

On vessels with overnight berthing areas:

- Verify operation of all emergency lighting upon loss of primary power. Ensure all points of egress are adequately lit.
- Ensure all egress paths are clear of debris, all escape scuttles, windows, doors and hatches are clearly labeled as "*Emergency Exit"* and operational from both sides.
- Ensure the safety briefing prior to getting underway includes awareness of potential fire hazards and instruction on all egress paths from all spaces below decks and operation of escape scuttles, windows, doors and hatches.
- Verify all general alarms and communication equipment to berthing areas are functional and all persons aboard are familiar with the vessel specific alarms. This is also to be included in the safety briefing.
- When scientific crews are embarked for overnight operations, boats must have night watchmen and procedures in place that define crew responsibilities for night watch when the vessel is underway, or at anchor.

Fire and evacuation drills must include movement of personnel from interior spaces through both primary and secondary egress routes. All drills, training, tests, inspections and safety briefs must be documented in the vessel log to include date, participants, location, type of emergency, deficiencies found and corrective actions. Clear roles, responsibilities and procedures should be tested and refined through frequent drills and involvement of all embarked personnel.

The Program Office and LOSBO's are available to provide further direction and technical support in this effort. As we refine our individual programs to address fire mitigation and response, the Program will take steps to share best practices and standardize requirements where needed. Your immediate attention to this serious potential risk is appreciated.