

Broken Vineyard Wind turbine blade sinks to ocean floor

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The blade that [fell from a damaged wind turbine](#) off the coast of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard Thursday has sunk to the ocean floor, officials said Friday.

In an update posted to the Nantucket town website Friday morning, officials said the fiberglass piece of the blade that detached from the turbine had sunk and would be "recovered in due course."

"Approximately half of the fiberglass shell of the blade remains attached, while most of the foam fill dislodged during the initial failure last Saturday," according to the town website. "Monitoring of the remaining attached piece is ongoing, and a plan is being developed for its removal."

Vineyard Wind, the company constructing the 62-turbine wind farm, publicly disclosed the damage to the turbine on Monday, two days after it was damaged, as [fiberglass foam debris began washing up](#) on the southern shores of Nantucket. Vineyard Wind has not said what caused the damage, but nobody was injured in the incident.

While initially, the broken portion of the 107-meter blade was hanging down from where it was still attached, on Wednesday night, Vineyard Wind said its condition was deteriorating and it would likely fall soon, which occurred the following morning.

As of Thursday, 56 people were working to clean up debris from the beaches and water, according to the town. Vineyard Wind is using models from the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to predict where debris will travel. The debris was expected to stay south of the island Friday, due to wind from the north.

Beaches on the southern shore of Nantucket were closed to swimming Tuesday because of the debris but have since reopened. The town said Friday the cleanup teams would also patrol the northern side of the island to ensure the area is ready for the Nantucket Triathlon, scheduled for Saturday.

Vineyard Wind is also developing a plan to conduct water testing around the island.

The company has said the debris is non-toxic but urged anyone who finds pieces of the debris to report them rather than touch or remove them themselves.

Anyone who finds debris is asked to report it by calling 781-983-8943 or by sending a report directly to the cleanup contractor [here](#).

The town said Friday that Vineyard Wind was working on setting up a process for financial claims.

"The impacts of this event will continue to unfold in the coming days and weeks," officials wrote. "Vineyard Wind is fully responsible for the repercussions on Nantucket, and town administration and the Select Board will ensure they are held accountable."

Vineyard Wind, which is a joint venture between energy company Avangrid and Copenhagen Infrastructure partners, [began producing energy](#) for the first time in January after the first turbine was installed in October 2023. It is the nation's first utility-scale offshore wind farm. When completed the turbines will be capable of generating more than 800 megawatts of power, enough electricity to power 400,000 homes and businesses, according to Vineyard Wind.

Damaged Offshore Vineyard Wind Blade ‘May Detach Soon,’ Ocean Turbines Company Says

By [State House News Service](#) | July 18, 2024, 9:32 EDT

By Chris Lisinski State House News Service

More debris is falling into the ocean from a damaged offshore wind turbine blade, and project developer Vineyard Wind said Wednesday night that a remaining piece of the blade could soon plummet.

Vineyard Wind announced just after 9 p.m. Wednesday, July 18 that crews reported an “observed compromise to the integrity” of the blade, which already sustained significant damage over the weekend.

“While part of the blade remains attached to the turbine, we believe there is an increased possibility it could detach soon. There has been a 500-meter safety zone implemented around the turbine and GE Vernova blade since Saturday night, and it has been under constant surveillance,” the company said in a written statement. “We have mobilized our response team and have also witnessed new debris enter the water.”

Vineyard Wind said it was notifying federal, state, local, and tribal authorities, including the federal Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, which previously [ordered work at the turbines to be suspended](#).

A mysterious incident [damaged one blade](#) on a turbine undergoing testing over the weekend, scattering debris that later washed up in the form of large and small fiberglass and foam pieces on Nantucket’s southern beaches more than 15 miles away.

The 107-meter blade sustained damage about 20 meters out from where it connects to the rest of the turbine. Although the incident flung blade pieces into the water, it did not fully sever the blade, and most of the blade spent several days hanging parallel to the tower.

Vineyard Wind and GE have not yet announced what caused the problem. At a Nantucket selectmen’s meeting Wednesday, July 18, Vineyard Wind chief executive officer Klaus Moeller described an alarm that tripped Saturday night, July 13.

“One of the blades on one of the positions was broken and folded over, bended over, and was not pointing in [the] direction that it should,” he said. “The way the system acts, it’s an automatic system, so the system actually shuts it down. And that’s what happened here.”

Moeller and other Vineyard Wind and GE representatives spent several hours before the Nantucket board of selectmen, answering some questions and hearing criticism from a frustrated, worried crowd.

Just before 8 p.m., Moeller suddenly announced he needed to leave to deal with a new problem affecting the “rest of the blade.”

“I want to apologize for our look at [our] phones, I didn’t mean to offend anyone, but it was because we were informed just now that there’s been a development to the integrity of the

blade,” Moeller told the board and attendees at the livestreamed public meeting. “We know very little because we’ve been sitting here, but I just want to inform you that there’s a development on the integrity of the rest of the blade, and I need to respond to that.”

The chairman of the Nantucket board of selectmen, Brooke Mohr, called it “an emerging issue with the remainder of the blade.”

“I think it’s reasonable to ask the team to go find out what’s going on,” she said, noting that other Vineyard Wind representatives could answer questions after Moeller’s departure. “Folks, this is the definition of crisis management. Things change by the minute, O.K.? We can only know what we know in the moment, so please, go and find out what’s going on and come back and let us know immediately.”

Residents and other interested parties who attended the meeting expressed outrage about the incident, its impact on the island, and potential consequences for marine life.

While environmental groups have said they have not observed any harm to marine life, attendees told Nantucket’s selectmen that they’re worried about lasting impacts from small plastic particles that might have fallen off the damaged blade.

Galen Gardner, a retired teacher, said Vineyard Wind and blade manufacturer GE “contributed gobbledegook science and corporate-speak to address the situation.”

“We are here tonight in a packed house to express our anger and dismay over the rape of our oceans, our peace, our prosperity, our beloved marine life,” Gardner said.

Vineyard Wind has 10 operational turbines that, before being shut down, were delivering about 136 megawatts of power to the regional grid. Project leaders eventually plan to scale up to 62 turbines providing 806 megawatts.

The company did not publicly reveal the Saturday incident until Monday, July 15, and similarly did not disclose that it shut down power production on Saturday night until Wednesday, July 17 — one day after federal safety officials said work at the project is “shut down until further notice.”