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Fire at Anguilla Landfill Forces Temporary Closure Amidst Ongoing Waste Management Challenges

Blaze breaks out at St. Croix's primary waste facility, sending smoke toward Henry E. Rohlsen Airport. The incident highlights ongoing issues as officials pursue a \$51 million expansion to extend the landfill's lifespan and address environmental concerns

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Smoke billowed westward, reaching the nearby Henry E. Rohlsen Airport and beyond, as emergency personnel worked to extinguish the fire. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The Anguilla Landfill on St. Croix was temporarily closed on Sunday after a fire broke out in the working phase of the landfill's south side, the V.I. Waste Management Authority announced.

WMA has advised the public to avoid the area while firefighting efforts continue. The V.I. Fire and Emergency Medical Service, WMA personnel, and the landfill contractor are collaborating to fully extinguish the flames, according to the release.

As plumes of smoke billowed westward, the nearby Henry E. Rohlsen Airport was affected, with the sky visibly impacted by the smoke. Despite this, there were no reported flight interruptions. The landfill is expected to remain closed until noon on Monday, while efforts to fully contain the fire proceed. The V.I. Department of Health will be assessing the situation and is expected to provide further updates to the community, WMA reported.

The incident brings renewed attention to the ongoing challenges facing waste management on St. Croix, particularly at the Anguilla Landfill, which has long been a focal point of solid waste disposal on the island.

The Anguilla Landfill has a long and complicated history, evolving from a simple dump in the 1950s and 1960s to a managed solid waste site. Currently, it handles roughly 300 tons of solid waste generated daily on St. Croix.

[In March 2023](#), the V.I. Housing Finance Authority revealed to lawmakers that it would cost approximately \$51 million to expand the landfill's southwest region. This expansion, expected to be funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, aims to extend the landfill's lifespan by several years while a new waste management site is identified and developed.

Ann Hanley, VIHFA's Director of Programs, explained that much of the project's high cost is attributed to the materials required for the expansion and the work needed to bring the landfill into compliance with federal regulations. Hanley also mentioned that sections of the landfill would be closed as part of the expansion, with the southeast corner being developed to provide approximately seven more years of usable "air space" for waste storage.

The need for an alternative landfill site has been a recurring topic, particularly given the landfill's location on FAA-owned land in south-central St. Croix. The FAA has voiced concerns for years over the potential danger posed to air traffic due to the landfill's proximity to the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport. The Anguilla Landfill's frequent attraction of birds poses a significant hazard to aircraft operations.

As part of a phased shutdown plan, the landfill was expected to commence the first of six closure phases in October 2023, covering the 35-acre site.

Despite the scheduled expansion, plans for a new landfill location remain uncertain. When questioned by lawmakers in March 2023, Ann Hanley deferred details about the future site to the V.I. Waste Management Authority, which continues to review potential locations under federal guidelines, considering factors such as environmental impact, public health, and proximity to infrastructure.