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EPA Directs PHRT to Remove More Chemicals from St. Croix Refinery

Order follows a September 2023 inspection revealing potential risks; PHRT must implement safety measures and remove hazardous materials from LPG Units. EPA to hold a virtual public meeting on August 27 to address community concerns

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A portion of the refinery on the south shore of St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced today that it has issued an administrative order on consent to Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation LLLP (PHRT), requiring the company to safely remove specific materials and adhere strictly to environmental regulations.

The EPA said the order is part of its ongoing efforts to protect the environment and public health on St. Croix, following a detailed inspection of the facility.

Lisa F. Garcia, EPA regional administrator, emphasized the agency's commitment to enforcing environmental laws and safeguarding the health of St. Croix residents. "EPA is upholding environmental laws and protecting people's health in St. Croix," said Ms. Garcia. "This order on consent is a continuation of EPA's work over the past several years to address risks at this facility that may pose a threat to people and the environment. We will work closely with PHRT, and monitor progress, to ensure the directives are completed."

PHRT said that since taking over operations at the St. Croix refinery, it has worked with the EPA to ensure that the facility remains safe and compliant with all applicable environmental regulations. The refinery added that while it "respectfully disagrees with EPA's assessment of the risks posed by the chemicals to be addressed at the refinery, many of which were intended for reuse upon the resumption of operations," PHRT consented to an administrative agreement with EPA to address its concerns.

"We have worked hard to respond to EPA's views, even where we do not agree with the Agency's position," said Fermin Rodriguez, vice president and refinery manager for Port Hamilton. "The refinery is also poised to bring back well-paying, skilled jobs to the Virgin Islands economy, and we will ensure we are proceeding in a manner that is protective of the refinery's workers and the local community." PHRT said it looks forward to continuing to work cooperatively with EPA and the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources to resume operations in the near future.

The EPA's administrative order follows a September 2023 inspection that identified potential risks related to the handling of materials that had not yet been removed from the refinery, specifically liquified petroleum gas (LPG) in LPG Units #1 and #2. This order builds on previous actions taken by PHRT during the summer of 2023, when other materials were removed under an earlier order on consent.

Under the new order, PHRT is required to:

- Immediately implement safety measures for LPG Units #1 and #2, including staffing for nightshift walk-downs and enhancing emergency response capabilities.
- Submit a detailed work plan for EPA approval, ensuring compliance with environmental laws and securing any necessary permits for material removal from LPG Units #1 and #2.
- Safely remove the materials from the identified LPG units.

The EPA said it will hold a virtual public meeting on Tuesday, August 27, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. AST to discuss the order and address questions from the community. Interested parties can attend the meeting [here](#).

To facilitate ongoing communication with the community, the EPA has established a toll-free hotline at (866) 462-4789 and is providing regular updates on its website. Additional information about the EPA's actions at the refinery can be found on the Refinery on St. Croix [webpage](#).