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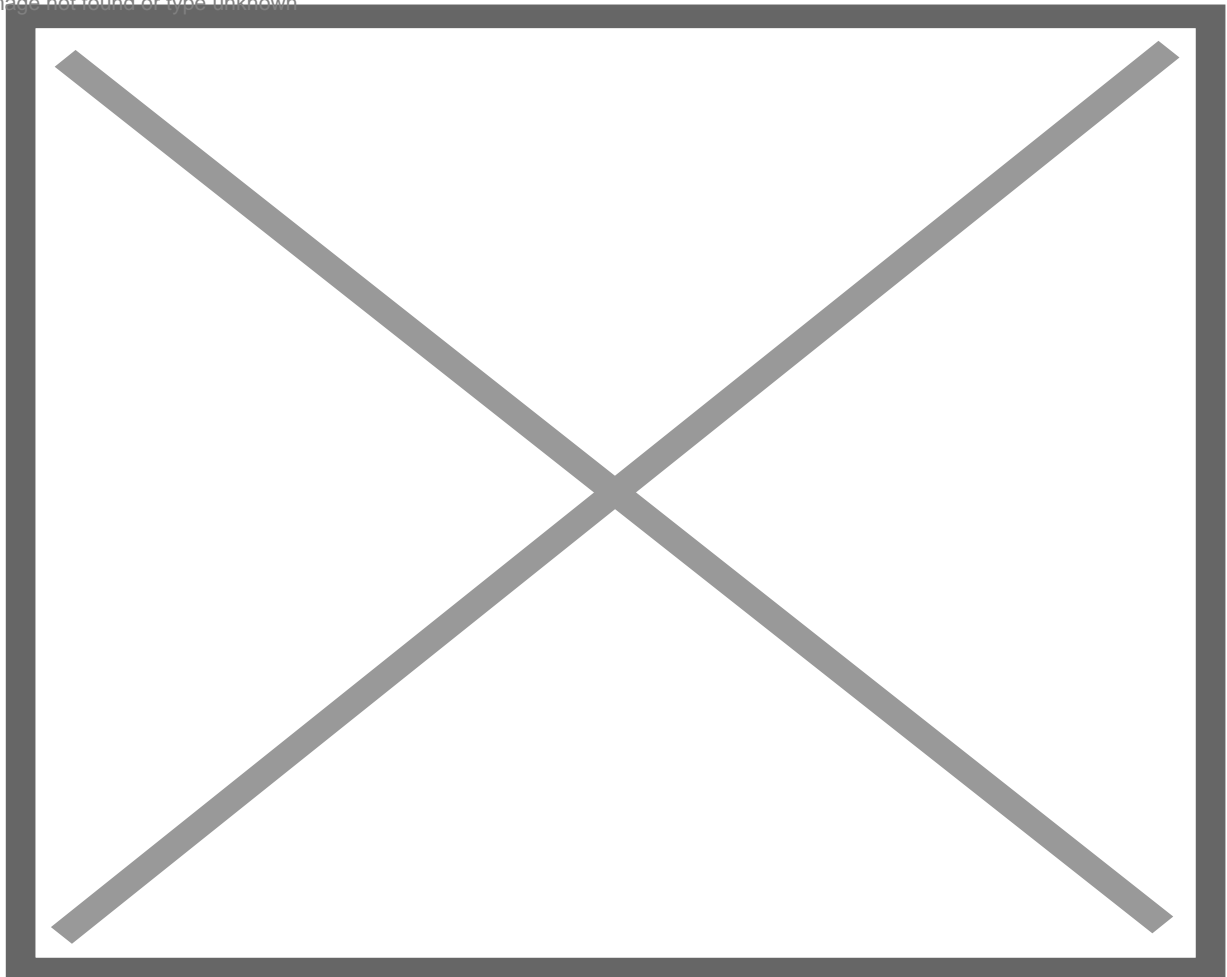
Territory Struggles With 1 Million Tire Disposal Backlog Amid Funding Delays

Despite the collection of more than \$2 million in legally mandated tire disposal fees since 2020, Waste Management Authority has received none of these funds, resulting in severe accumulation in landfills and illegal dumping sites.

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As of February, 2025, there were approximately 1 million tires awaiting disposal in the U.S. Virgin Islands. However, the Waste Management Authority says that it lacks the funding to remove this rubber waste from the territory's landfills and other sites where they are indiscriminately dumped.

The sheer number of used tires at the landfills has been described as a “glaring issue” by WMA’s interim executive director Darryl Griffith. WMA estimates that there are 400,00 used tires in each landfill. Furthermore, “over 250,000 tires are estimated to be littered in the bushes throughout the territory,” Mr. Griffith told lawmakers on the Senate Committee on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunications.

To tackle the growing issue, WMA has identified a business in Puerto Rico which is willing to accept the used tires after they are cleaned and cut in half. Despite not having funds budgeted to do so, Mr. Griffith told senators that he had nonetheless identified a solution.

Act 8370, signed into law in October 2020, establishes a tire disposal fee to be added to each retail sale of tires, Mr. Griffith reminded lawmakers. The fee is supposed to be administered by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (“IRB” in the legislative text) on behalf of the WMA. “IRB charges \$1 for tires under 18 inches, and \$2 for tires over 18 inches, IRB also charges excise tax for tires,” Mr. Griffith read. “IRB has generated over \$2 million in fees from these programs and has submitted the funds to the Department of Finance,” he said. The law directs that the monies collected be earmarked for a specific fund within the Treasury – The Waste Tire Management and Disposal Fund – for WMA to use to collect and dispose of waste tires. Despite the clear language of the law, Mr. Griffith testified that “Waste Management has received none of these funds.”

During Friday’s committee meeting, he appealed to lawmakers to intervene. “If possible, the Authority requests from the Senate that the IRB funds be sent directly to Waste Management so that we can begin tackling this long-standing issue of used tires.”

“Why can’t we have the funds allocated to you. You need the money,” wondered Senator Angel Bolques Jr. Mr. Griffith replied that they have “begged [the] Department of Finance for it, but they also have other pressing responsibilities. So sometimes funds go to WAPA or to the hospital, but we receive zero of those funds.”

However, instead of immediate legislative intervention, Bolques suggested that WMA should initiate “a conversation or a request directly to IRB to appropriate the funds to the Waste Management Authority.” “I would encourage you to have some discussions, because you need that money as soon as possible,” advised the lawmaker.