

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Nighttime American Airlines Flight to St. Croix Delayed Into Tuesday After Control Tower Instrument Failure

AA Flight 2959 from MIA set to arrive Mon. night, Dec. 22, was delayed until Tues., Dec. 23, after a malfunctioning instrument at St. Croix Control Tower triggered FAA safety protocols requiring 24 hours of testing before nighttime operations can resume.

Travel / **Published On December 22, 2025 06:41 PM /**

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Last updated at 6:57 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 22, 2025

ST. CROIX — A nighttime American Airlines flight scheduled to land on St. Croix Monday night was delayed to Tuesday morning after a technical issue at the island's air traffic control tower triggered federal safety protocols that prevent nighttime operations until

required testing is completed, according to airport and airline officials.

American Airlines Flight 2959, scheduled to depart Miami at 6:51 p.m. Monday, Dec. 22, and arrive in St. Croix at 10:48 p.m., was delayed as of noon Monday until 5:00 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 23. The airline cited "conditions at the destination airport" as the reason for the delay.

The underlying issue, according to Carlton Dowe, executive director of the V.I. Port Authority, involved a malfunctioning instrument at the St. Croix Control Tower. Dowe said the instrument has since been repaired and is operational, but federal aviation rules require it to run continuously for at least 24 hours before it can be used to support nighttime flight operations.

"That has strictly to do with the tower," Dowe told the Consortium. "It's up and running but it wouldn't be ready to go into operation until tomorrow."

Mr. Dowe explained that the requirement is tied to Federal Aviation Administration safety protocols and applies only to nighttime arrivals. Daytime flights and inter-island operations were not affected, he said, emphasizing that the disruption was limited to the late-night American Airlines service.

The Port Authority executive director acknowledged the inconvenience caused by the delay, particularly given the busy holiday travel period, and issued an apology to affected passengers. While noting that the matter falls under federal oversight, Dowe said safety considerations must take precedence. "Why we hate it and we do apologize, but it's best that everyone is safe," he said.

As of Monday evening, the expectation was that once the 24-hour testing requirement is satisfied, the repaired instrument will be cleared for use, allowing nighttime flights to resume as scheduled.