

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Judge Orders Consolidation of 90 Refinery Health Lawsuits in Superior Court

A Superior Court judge ordered 90 lawsuits alleging toxic exposure at St. Croix's former refinery to be consolidated under a master case, streamlining discovery and pretrial coordination as plaintiffs seek accountability from multiple contractor companies

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An aerial view of the refinery and terminal facility on St. Croix's south shore. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

In 2025, attorney John-Russel Pate, current President of the Virgin Islands Bar Association, filed 90 cases claiming that the plaintiffs all suffered negative health

consequences due to their employment at St. Croix's refinery when it was owned by Hess/HOVIC.

Now, Superior Court Judge Alphonso Andrews has ordered that all 90, plus any others filed subsequently that fit the profile, will be grouped under a master case “for purposes of issuing case management orders and filing documents that apply to all or most of the cases, so as to facilitate pre-trial co-ordination and discovery matters.”

On behalf of his clients, Mr. Pate has argued that companies which served as contractors for the refinery [acted negligently in exposing employees to toxic, asbestos-containing dust](#) without proper safety equipment or procedures. The list of defendants include Virgin Islands Industrial Maintenance Corporation, Riggers & Erectors Virgin Islands Corporation, and Pinnacle Services LLC, among other companies that have reportedly acknowledged a “joint corporate history” before the courts.

As the lone attorney litigating on behalf of over 90 individuals and families grappling with post-refinery health challenges, Judge Andrews’s order consolidating the cases likely comes as a relief to Mr. Pate, who now has a streamlined manner in which to make his filings and various representations to the court. In an interview with Consortium journalists last October, he noted the heavy administrative load on his office and the length of time that has elapsed when it comes to some of these matters. More than one plaintiff [has passed away](#), leaving their grieving families to continue to press for compensation for their loved ones ailments.

By and large, the lawsuits filed last year are still in their preliminary stages, with some receiving a response from the named defendants. Despite the current progress in establishing a master case, a resolution to this complex litigation is still a distant target.