

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Vacationing Family Poisoned By Pesticide At Luxury St. John Condo

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A Delaware man, his wife and two teenage sons were poisoned last week while vacationing at a luxury St. John condo, according to information released late Monday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Reports say Steve Esmond, his wife, Dr. Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons were staying at the Sirenusa complex in the Capri villa, an \$800-a-night condo that overlooks Cruz Bay. The EPA, in a press release, said the family may have been exposed to methyl bromide that was likely used to fumigate the condominium on March 18 during a clean out.

According to the federal agency, the pesticide is restricted in the U.S. because of its acute toxicity. Furthermore, only certified applicators are allowed to use it in certain agricultural settings, and is not authorized for use in dwellings.

The EPA release also said that agency officials would "ensure that appropriate steps are taken if it determines any environmental regulations or laws were violated."

Judith A. Enck, EPA's regional administrator, said, "Protecting people's health in the U.S. Virgin Islands is of paramount importance." She further pointed out that the agency was in the process of determining "how this happened and will make sure steps are taken to prevent this from happening to others at these vacation apartments or elsewhere."

James J. Maron, a lawyer from Wilmington, Del. who is acting as the family spokesman, said the family "began having seizures in the middle of the night and their lungs stopped working. They all had to be intubated. This is serious stuff."

Ronnie Klingsberg, public information officer at St. John Rescue, corroborated Maron's statement that the Esmonds were suffering from seizures.

"Health effects of acute exposure to methyl bromide are serious and include central nervous system and respiratory system damage," the EPA release said.

News of the poisoning has spread to U.S. media, with Delaware Online reporting that state Sen. Chris Coons, a friend of the Esmond family, has been assisting in getting the family back to the U.S. mainland for treatment. The online news medium also reports that other Delaware families were in St. John and socialized with the Esmonds.

The EPA and the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources are investigating the incident.

Feature Image: The Capri in St. John is one of 22 Sirenusa villas managed and marketed by Sea Glass Vacations

Image Credit: Sea Glass Vacations Facebook page