

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. John Condo Poisoning: Justice Dept. Launches Criminal Investigation Into Terminix

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ST. JOHN -- The U.S. Justice Department has launched an investigation into the local arm of Terminix, the company responsible for fumigating an apartment below a luxury condominium in St. John with pesticides that caused a Delaware family vacationing in the condo to [become critically ill](#).

On Wednesday, March 26, David Adams, manager of the St. John operations for Sea Glass Vacations, issued a written statement stating that Steve Esmond, who was joined by his wife, Dr. Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons, rented the Capri for nine days, March 14 – 22. Esmond and his family stayed in an \$800-a-night suit.

The condo below the Esmonds' villa "was recently treated for pests by Terminix, however, Villa Capri itself had not been so treated," Adams wrote.

The Capri is one of 22 Sirenusa villas managed and marketed by Sea Glass Vacations.

Sea Glass "does not treat the unit it manages for pests but instead relies on licensed professionals for pest control service," the statement added. Adams referred all other questions to Terminix.

Word of the unfortunate occurrence has made its way to major U.S. news outlets, including CNN, CBS, NBC and others, and new information released by the Delaware family's lawyer reveal that, while the parents are doing better, the two children are in "rough condition."

The lawyer [told CNN](#) that the older boy had blood in his lungs and his heart was failing, and the other boy suffered brain damage. The father, who is now awake, can't talk and the mother has been released to occupational therapy because she had a lesser degree of exposure.

The pesticide that Terminix used has been identified as Meth-O-Gas, which contains the heavily restricted methyl bromide, the chemical at the heart of the controversy. The indoor use of the pesticide, which can cause damage to the central nervous system and respiratory system, is illegal in both the U.S. and the territory.

Days following the incident, the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), [issued a Stop Use Order to Terminix](#), which gave the company a limited time to provide documentation revealing any other location within the territory the product was purchased.

DPNR also ordered the beleaguered company to quarantine all pesticides containing methyl bromide in a secure location.

In light of what unfolded, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a warning about the use of pesticides in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and said that its investigations, along with DPNR's, continues.

"The EPA is working closely with the U.S. Virgin Islands government to investigate an incident of suspected exposure to methyl bromide reported on March 20, 2015," the EPA said in a statement released to media. The agency said its investigation includes air monitoring and environmental sampling.

Governor Kenneth Mapp, in a statement issued last month, sent best wishes to the family while conveying confidence in the territory's response to the situation.

"The people of the U.S. Virgin Islands pray for the full recovery of the Esmond family," he said. "We will continue to do all that is possible to determine how this unprecedented event occurred, and to prevent it from ever happening in the future. Our residents and visitors can remain confident in the quality and readiness of our healthcare services. For that, we are thankful."

A spokesperson for Terminix said the company is "cooperating fully with local and federal officials to determine the cause of the incident reported in St. John. At this time, we have

limited details so we cannot comment further."

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