

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Gov. Mapp Appears On CNN, Says Use Of Toxic Pesticide Might Be More Widespread Than First Reported

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ST. JOHN – Gov. Kenneth Mapp appeared in CNN reports over the weekend saying that the private exterminating company likely to blame for the poisoning of a Delaware family at a Cruz Bay luxury resort in March might have used the pesticide more widely throughout the territory than had been first reported.

Meanwhile, Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner designee Dawn Henry was quoted on the Cable News Network website as saying that all known canisters of methyl bromide – the pesticide suspected in the poisoning of Theresa Devine, Steve Esmond

and their two teenage sons at Sirenusa Resort in St. John – have been collected and will be shipped off-island to be destroyed.

Government officials told CNN that they are trying to determine if other tourists might have been affected by the use of methyl bromide after investigators determined that it has been used throughout the Virgin Islands by the pest control company Terminix.

"What these companies did or appear to have been doing is clearly a violation of the law and they'll be held accountable for it," Mapp told CNN, adding that he has since discovered that his own condominium was fumigated with methyl bromide in 2013, but said the government has no additional reports of people getting sick.

Devine, Esmond and their two children fell gravely ill and suffered seizures after first being exposed to methyl bromide last month when it was used to fumigate a unit below the one they were renting from Sirenusa Resort. The two brothers aged 14 and 16 remain in comas, but Esmond has regained consciousness and Devine is undergoing occupational therapy, CNN reported.

Methyl bromide is banned from indoor use, and is only approved as an agricultural pesticide. Henry told CNN that DPNR's investigation has determined the pesticide was also likely used last fall at the same Sirenusa Resort in St. John, as well as in a vacation villa in St. Croix and in two locations not frequented by tourists.

Terminix – the company that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency alleged to be responsible for the use of methyl bromide at Sirenusa – released a statement saying it is "committed to performing all work in a manner that is safe for our customers, employees, the public and the environment" and is "looking into this matter internally, and cooperating with authorities." Terminix is corporate-owned in St. Thomas.

The U.S. Department of Justice is conducting a criminal investigation into the poisoning of the Devine-Esmond family and Mapp told CNN that DPNR's investigation would focus on whether the proper paperwork was filled out when the canisters were ordered, or if methyl bromide was smuggled in.

"If they purchased it and on these forms they said their use was for agriculture purposes, which is the only legal way they could use it, and then brought them into the territory and used them in commercial and residential buildings, that's a clear and malice violation of the law," he said.

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