

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Methyl Bromide Used In St. John Resort Came From Puerto Rico, EPA Says

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ST. JOHN – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday afternoon that the improper use of methyl bromide – an extremely toxic pesticide that is only supposed to be used outdoors – may extend to Puerto Rico as well.

The EPA said that in conjunction with its joint investigation involving Virgin Islands government agencies, it has determined that the methyl bromide used to fumigate the Sirenusa Resort in Cruz Bay, St. John came from licensed distributors in Puerto Rico.

The improper use of methyl bromide to fumigate a villa below the one Theresa Devine, Steve Esmond and their two children were renting at Sirenusa caused the Delaware

family to fall gravely ill and suffered seizures after first being exposed to the pesticide in March. The family's two sons aged 14 and 16 remain in comas, but Esmond has regained consciousness and Devine is undergoing occupational therapy.

The EPA said as part of its investigation into what happened in the Virgin Islands, it has discovered documents that show that methyl bromide has been used improperly at "various locations in Puerto Rico" and that it will try to ensure that the public health is protected there also.

Gov. Kenneth Mapp [recently appeared](#) on CNN saying that Terminix, a private company here headquartered in St. Thomas, was likely to blame for the poisoning of the Devine-Esmond family at Sirenusa and that the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources investigation has determined that the luxury resort in March might have used the pesticide more widely throughout the territory than had been first reported.

DPNR Commissioner designee Dawn Henry has said that all known canisters of methyl bromide have been collected and will be shipped off-island to be destroyed. Just as the EPA is trying to determine if people in Puerto Rico have been affected by the use of methyl bromide, the Virgin Islands government is trying to determine if anyone in St. Thomas, St. Croix or Water Island has been affected knowing that it has been used widely throughout the territory.

Image Credit: Repeating Islands