

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Port Authority Halts Fuel Tank Storage At Gallows Bay Port

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ST. CROIX -- Following a [recent article](#) on *The Consortium* and various complaints from residence in the Gallows Bay area, The Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA) has announced the halting of fuel tank storage at the small marine facility, according to a press release VIPA issued today.

Tank storage in Gallows Bay will come to an end on August 1, according to VIPA, as agency officials concluded that the storage of gasoline cylinders containing petro chemical, liquid propane or natural gas at the Gallows Bay port poses a serious risk to the surrounding community.

"Operators berthing vessels at the facility with general cargo and a maximum of three gas tanks will be allowed to unload and transfer the tanks from the vessels by trucks. The tanks must be removed from the facility immediately. Staging of gas tanks at the Gallows Bay Marine Facility will be prohibited," VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe said.

Damian Cartwright, senior engineer for VIPA told *VI Consortium* last week that the upsurge of delivery to the Christiansted facility causing residents and officials to express concern came about after the closure of HOVENSA, which saw gas station owners and other companies in the business of fuel using the port as their new route. Some of the companies that ship the tanks to the port include Norma H and Water Spirit. Bunkers of St. Croix, one of the more recognizable names in the business of fuel-hauling, receives its shipments from the Gordon A. Finch Molasses Pier on the south shore of the island on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, according to VIPA officials.

Sen. Kenneth Gittens, aligned with residents concerned about safety, said last week that he's long called for a stoppage of the fuel tanks being stored in Gallows Bay. However, following today's announcement, the senator issued a press release praising the move, although shuttering the storage on August 1 is not immediate enough, he said.

"While I thank the port authority for addressing the community's concerns and taking action, I believe that a month is a bit long for removal; however, we are a praying community and we are prayerful and hopeful that nothing happens before the removal," he said. But Dowe said the reason for the month's wait is to give the shipping companies thirty days' notice to make any necessary preparations for the change in VIPA's operations policy.

The Port Authority has designated the Molasses Pier as the facility for the staging of all gas tanks and the unloading of more than three tanks, located on the south shore of the island adjacent to the Wilfred 'Bomba' Allick Port & Transshipment Center (the Container Port).

Dowe said VIPA recognizes that the change will cause some inconveniences to the shipping companies and businesses that rely on gas being shipped to St. Croix. However, the decision was made in the best interest of the public to prevent a tragedy.

The executive director also revealed that he conferred with the heads of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, VI Fire Services, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the US Coast Guard, and the Office of the St. Croix Administrator. These agencies agree with VIPA's decision to store gas tanks at the Molasses Pier in the interest of public safety.

Feature Image: Tanks lined on the Gallows Bay port in Christiansted.