

The Virgin Islands Consortium

There's A Huge Propane Gas Tank Installed Near Classrooms At The Claude O. Markoe Elementary School

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ST. CROIX -- A sizable gas tank used by the Department of Human Services has been embedded on the grounds of the Claude O. Markoe Elementary School in Frederiksted, posing a dangerous and even deadly threat to the children, faculty and staff who attend and work at the school.

The propane gas tank was discovered during a school tour organized by the Department of Education and the 31st Legislature, where Education officials, including Commissioner Sharon McCollum and Assistant Commissioner Charmaine Hobson-Johnson, senators,

among them Kurt Violet, Myron Jackson, Kenneth Gittens and others — along with members the Senate's staff — traversed the grounds of Claude O. Markoe, Eulalie Rivera and Charles H. Emanuel Elementary Schools, examining their surroundings and classrooms to see firsthand if they were prepared for the new school year. These schools were chosen because they are set to house students from schools [temporarily shuttered](#)



Senators, 31st Legislature staff and DOE

officials touring the Claude O. Markoe Elementary School in Frederiksted.

But while inspecting Claude O. Markoe, the senators saw the sizable tank and began asking questions about its placement, and who had authorized the decision. Department of Education officials said they did not want the tank placed so prominently on the grounds of an elementary schools, especially where children gather, but it was determined that the cost to relocate the tank was too high.

Senators Gittens and Violet expressed displeasure, and Gittens called for it to be removed. Violet, however, said the tank had been so prominently placed with complex wiring, that it would be very expensive to remove, and the next best solution may be to secure the tank so that if it explodes, the impact would be contained to its immediate location, and not spread to the near classes -- potentially wounding, even fatally, children.

A tour guide said DOE officials should have been involved from day one, hinting that they were not. It was also made known that a company from Puerto Rico had installed the tank having been given the approval by DPNR.

"If anything happens here, God forbid," Gittens said, adding that action should taken to remove the tank or his voice would be heard until it's placed elsewhere.

And while there remained a lot of work to be done on Claude O. Markoe and the other schools that were inspected on August 12, DOE officials assured that the facilities would be ready to house students from the shuttered schools in time for the new school year.

The Consortium is currently investigating the tank placement matter, and a followup story will be forthcoming.