

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Even After Claims Of Repair By DPNR, Frederiksted Library Remains Moldy And Unhealthy

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ST. CROIX -- The Department of Planning and Natural Resources, through a press release issued on Monday, October 19, stated that the Frederiksted Library, after much-needed repairs, had reopened its doors to the public.

The release stated that DPNR had conducted work required to rehabilitate the facility, undertook a thorough cleaning during the closure, and was ready to start offering services to the public once more.

But after a concerned resident, who regularly visits the Frederiksted Library, contacted The Consortium complaining of mold and how it affected her and, even worse, her child,

the publication decided to visit the public facility for a firsthand look.

Inside the Athalie M. Petersen Library in Frederiksted



























Earlier this year, it was announced that nearly \$1 million in grant funding had been released under the Office of Insular Affairs' Capital Improvement Project Program to make infrastructure improvements at three public library facilities throughout the territory: the Athalie M. Petersen Library in Frederiksted, Florence Williams Library in Christiansted and the Elaine I. Sprauve Library in Cruz Bay, St. John. But a quick tour of the Frederiksted library by a Consortium reporter, revealed that the library remains in need of restoration. Immediately upon entering, deteriorating lumber is glaringly visible behind a counter where a librarian sits. A quick look at the ceiling on the second floor exposes its poor, moldy condition, especially to the north side. The air felt heavy and congested after just a few minutes, and some of the walls were also deteriorating.

Although a mold allergy is the most common problem caused by exposure to mold, mold can cause illness without an allergic reaction. Mold can also cause infections or irritant and toxic reactions. Infections caused by mold can lead to a variety of problems from flu-like symptoms to skin infections and even pneumonia. -- Definition.

On the third floor, hot with no air conditioning, the windows were unwelcoming. And a room that contained a small microwave was the unhealthiest of all; with items scattered about the floor and on a table in the center.

The first floor, apparently for children, was hot and moldy, too, engulfed with a heavy, stale air and an odd, old smell.

While the outside of the facility gives the sense that repairs had been performed, and on the surface, the inside seemed clean, a closer look at the Athalie M. Petersen Library in Frederiksted revealed a place that should not be opened to the public; at least not yet, and DPNR should conduct an investigation into why the facility remains in such poor condition, if indeed at least one third of the \$1 million dollars released by the Office of Insular Affairs -- \$333,333 -- was spent on repairing the public space.

Feature Image: A collage showing the inside of the Athalie M. Petersen Library in Frederiksted.

Image Credit: VIC.