

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sewage Backup Problem At Ricardo Richards Rectified, D.O.E. Says, School Resumes On Tuesday

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ST. CROIX -- Parents concerned with a sewage problem affecting the Ricardo Richards Elementary School in Estate Strawberry today contacted The Consortium in regards to the matter this afternoon. Some also contended that students should have been sent home because of water problems they said was affecting the school, but most said they were disturbed that a sewage backup that contaminated the school's cafeteria was not enough to prompt school officials to stop serving meals from the affected cafeteria altogether.

However, in responding to a Consortium inquiry late Monday, Department of Education said classes at Ricardo Richards will resume on Tuesday morning, as the school was not

affected by the water problems caused by the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority that's affecting other schools. And in regards to the sewage backup matter, D.O.E. challenged the parents' version of what occurred today, stating that aside from the sewage backup being an isolated incident, meals were not served or prepared from the contaminated cafeteria.

"When the problem was identified, the cafeteria was immediately closed and students were moved to a sterile location on the campus and served breakfast," D.O.E. said. The department said meals were prepared at the Juanita Gardine Elementary School and transported to Ricardo Richareds "under the watchful eyes of the Department of Health and the State Office of School Lunch."

D.O.E. said appropriate health personnel specializing in environmental health were called in to the school to oversee students being fed and the cleanup of the cafeteria. It also said that a licensed cleaning crew was called in to thoroughly clean and disinfect the cafeteria.

The source of the backup was identified as an abundance of toilet paper; which is not an ongoing issue at the school. And the sewage lines were properly cleared and are functional again, according to D.O.E.

"The matter has been resolved; the cafeteria is properly cleaned and disinfected," D.O.E. said.