

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Labor Dept. Hush-Hush About Foul Smell At Sion Farm Office, Sends Employees Home Early

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ST. CROIX -- Earlier this month, on March 3, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor sent home early employees working at its Sion Farm office, citing technical problems with the department's air conditioning system. Employees returned to work the following day, on March 4.

Today, D.O.L. again dismissed the same employees before regular closing hours, citing "an ongoing air quality issue." This time, however, employees won't report to work until Friday.

Why is that? D.O.L. would not say, but frustrated employees contacted The Consortium today, revealing in full what has been occurring, and also to bring attention to the situation.

They all requested anonymity to speak freely about the ongoing problem.

One of these employees told the publication that on March 3, employees had walked into the building only to be greeted by a foul smell. And after "numerous complaints of itchy/burning eyes and throat, headaches, fatigue, rash on skin, heavy breathing and dry mouth," D.O.L. management called an air conditioning company to do an assessment of the A.C. unit.

"They detected a freon leak and repaired the unit and cleaned the filters," one of the employees said. The problem, however, was not fixed, and the employees in contact with The Consortium said they've been neglected ever since.

"Today is March 16, and we are still complaining of the same symptoms. Attempts have been made by phone and email to the commissioner and assistant commissioner and [we] haven't gotten a response as to what is being done to remedy the situation," an employee said.

The employee added that a company called Adcon Environmental was supposed to assess the air quality on Monday, March 14th, but "we have not gotten a response from management on their findings. We are being told to go home if being affected but they are using employees sick time. We are being treated worse than animals!"

"The talk is there is a possibility of mold in the building from files that were contaminated from the old Labor building in Sunny Isles but no one wants to confirm. At this moment the smell is terrible downstairs! There is no one in the Office of the Commissioner to bring our complaint to at this time. This needs attention and I am hoping you can help," the employee concluded.

After employees refused to work in the office, some sat outside today, forcing D.O.L. to close its doors early.

Feature Image: D.O.L.'s office in Sion Farm, St. Croix.

Image Credit: VIC.