

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Reports Of Unclean Floors, Dirty Shelves And Expired Goods On Display At Supermarkets Move D.L.C.A. To Respond

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ST. CROIX -- Department of Licensing and Consume Affairs Commissioner Devin Carrington on Wednesday warned business owners who do not uphold sanitary standards at their supermarkets that D.L.C.A. maintains the right to revoke, suspend or simply not renew licensees. Mr. Carrington, fueled by multiple reports from residents, issued a direct statement that sought to encourage the supermarket owners to take necessary steps in ensuring that such conditions were rectified.

"DLCA has received several reports from consumers concerning the deplorable conditions in supermarkets ranging from unclean floors, to shelves that are dirty and in disarray," Mr. Carrington said. "Of particular concern are reports concerning outdated food products on display for sale on supermarket shelves, rotten fruits and vegetables and improperly functioning freezers that result in consumers purchasing meat products that are spoiled. Consumers, unfortunately, only realize they have purchased unusable items after they arrive home to use the product."

He added: "I've repeatedly advised the proprietors of these establishments that consumers in the Virgin Islands, like consumers stateside, have the right to receive the highest quality of produce and food items for the hard earned dollars they spend. This is especially so, since the prices here are disproportionately higher than national rates. It is obvious that the days of inferior and outdated products rejected by stateside supermarkets being dumped in the Virgin Islands for sale are not behind us. I would hate to conclude that Virgin Islands consumers are somehow viewed by owners of these establishments as not worthy of the most exceptional treatment as consumers."

At the heart of Mr. Carrington's angst, is the possibility of residents who purchase expired items, or buy goods in unsanitary businesses, becoming ill. "Certainly, a supermarket allowing the sale of inferior or spoiled items that may carry the risk of health concerns to consumers is wrongful and of serious public concern," he said.

D.L.C.A. says it will continue to conduct regular monitoring and inspections of these establishments and issue citations where warranted. But the agency encouraged the community to continue its vigilance.

"It is with the help of consumers that the department is able to become more aware of the types of unacceptable conditions described here," Mr. Carrington said. "I again stress that the consumer has much more power than most realize. Consumers should bring to the attention of store management that such inferior items being on the shelves is unacceptable. If concerns are not addressed, consumers should take any measure necessary to let other consumers know of the conditions. Negative publicity is never welcomed by businesses."

According to the release, D.L.C.A. is forming a Consumer Advocacy Group to report and address what the issues are when the public obtains or consumes goods and commodities in the Virgin Islands. Individuals interested in serving as member of the Consumer Advocacy Group, or to report concerns regarding business misconduct are asked to contact the agency at 714.3522 on St. Thomas, 713.3522 on St. Croix and 690.8036 on St. John.