

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Reeling From Backlash, Wendy's Apologizes; Promises To Do Better

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ST. CROIX -- In an updated statement issued this morning, the management of the local Wendy's restaurant located in Sunny Isle, has apologized for what has been a damaging set of events that began on Sunday, when a resident visited the facility and saw rats inside and outside the establishment.

Wendy's has great respect for our loyal and deserving Virgin Islands customers. We apologize and promise to be better because of this. We appreciate your loyalty.

On Monday, the resident reported the situation to the Department of Health, and on Tuesday at about noon, a D.O.H. inspector, after examining the restaurant, immediately issued a cease and desist letter directed to the local owners, shuttering the facility and demanding that it get into compliance with Virgin Islands sanitary laws before it could be reopened.

"The restaurant environment that we provide our customers is very important to us and we are taking this matter very seriously. We are cooperating fully with the Health Department, and we are working with the pest control company to resolve this situation as quickly as possible," reads the updated statement. "Wendy's has great respect for our loyal and deserving Virgin Islands customers. We apologize and promise to be better because of this. We appreciate your loyalty."

The findings has caused great damage to the restaurant, which has been one of the most patronized fast food chains on this island. Many have taken to social media expressing shock and disgust at the inspector's findings. The story has been shared over 1,300 times on The Consortium's Facebook platform.

"I'm so happy!" [expressed commenter Tuesdi Blair](#). "From the time I saw that huge rat run from the door to the garbage in February, was the last time I ate from there!"

Other commenters pinned some responsibility on the Department of Health, castigating the government entity for not doing its job of regular inspection.

"Department of health should be ashamed that someone had to call for them to do what should be a regular inspection of food establishments in the territory," said [Miron Reynolds](#).

Others vowed never to patronize Wendy's if the restaurant reopens, and some urged D.O.H. to inspect other fast food restaurants.

"They should check other fast food restaurants, and some of these inspectors ain't doing their job properly, but it's about time they do what's right. Hope they continue the work. Shame on them!" said [El Indio](#).

According to D.O.H. Director of Public Relations, Nykole Tyson, D.O.H. received a complaint on Monday by a concerned resident, who had visited the facility Sunday night, and stated that large rats were inside and outside of Wendy's.

During the inspection, which began at about noon on Tuesday, the inspector encountered rat droppings inside ketchup boxes and in a storage area, according to Ms. Tyson. The inspector also found cockroaches in the establishment, including in a food machine, and also crawling on walls.

The inspector immediately issued a cease and desist document directed to the local franchise owners of Wendy's, and a citation for closure of the facility until the violations were rectified.

Citing Virgin Islands Code, Ms. Tyson noted one of the violations as Abatement of Nuisance. She said the inspector found that employees would open the restaurant without cleaning it, leaving rat droppings visible. The inspector also found that a strong

urine odor engulfed the dining area.

The second violation was Unsanitary Conditions, as the inspector found that Wendy's kitchen floor had grease buildup, and the kitchen walls were unsanitary. The inspector also found mold buildup behind an ice machine and trash was found on the floor in the storage area.

Ms. Tyson said the third violation was Accumulation Prohibited, as the inspector found that Wendy's, overall, was kept in an unsanitary manner, and employees would ignore trash visible on the floor. The fourth violation deals with insects and pests, as the inspector found rats and rat droppings inside Wendy's, in boxes of ketchup and on the kitchen floor.

"The citation was given on the spot," Ms. Tyson said. "They were ordered to close the establishment until all violations were rectified."