

The Virgin Islands Consortium

H.H. Tire & Battery Fire Contained; Cause Unknown

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ST. CROIX -- In an all-hands-on-deck effort from the Virgin Islands Fire Service, with personnel from all of the department's branches on this island forming one unit for fast and efficient results, Fire Service personnel were able to put out the fire at H.H. Tire & Battery that [raged in the early morning hours of Monday](#), ravaging the entire facility and sparing nothing in its path.

The building's roof caved in; vehicles belonging to residents that stayed at the facility overnight for repairs were left with only their body frames; smoke from burned tires, batteries and other items letting off toxic plumes engulfed the skies and spread west, causing the closure of at least six schools, according to the Department of Education. The Superior Court also shuttered half-day, and classes at the St. Croix Career and

Technical Education Center -- with the inclusion of the Adult Secondary Education Program -- were canceled.

According to Fire Service Lieutenant Paul Christian, the cause of the fire remains unknown. He said once the smoke had subsided, the department's fire investigators would begin the process of searching for clues relative to what caused the building to burn. Insurance inspectors would also do their own investigation into the incident, he said. Whether Fire Service personnel would even begin the inspection process on Monday was uncertain.

[View the original embedded media](#)

Fire Service Director Clifford Joseph expressed remorse this afternoon for both the owners of H.H. Tire & Battery, as well as the employees who are now out of work.

"I really feel sorry for not only the owner but the employees, because the employees hit a wall," he said. "Fire destroys and it takes away from you."

Some Department of Public Works personnel were also on the scene to help Fire Service personnel bulldoze the walls on either side of the building to get in, as the facility's industrial doors were shut. The building was destroyed from front to back, as the flames ruined every section of the venerable business; H.H. Tire & Battery was a stalwart in the community that employed many, and had been in existence for 52 years, according to a blurb on the company's website.

While the fire was still raging in the wee hours of Monday morning, loud explosions -- possibly from batteries and other combustible products -- rocked the Castle Coakley neighborhood. The fire was so fierce that the heat could be felt all the way to the Bates Trucking entrance. Multiple fire trucks worked around the clock to contain the blaze, and in a stroke of luck, they were aided by rain, which came heavily at dawn, dousing the fire with an incessant pouring.

There was no one from H.H. Tire & Battery who would comment on the incident this afternoon.

Started by Howard Hensley in 1964, H.H. Tire & Battery had become a go-to location for vehicle maintenance. The company was "built on the foundation of providing quality products and outstanding customer service for a reasonable price," reads the website. The firm had since grown to become the largest shop of its kind on the island.