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Trash Piles up in St. Thomas as Trucking Company Refuses to Work Without Pay; Waste Management Asks Community to be Patient

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Garbage pileup at various sites in St. Thomas on Sunday, July 19, 2020

ST. THOMAS — The Waste Management Authority on Sunday afternoon asked the St. Thomas community to be patient with it as it attempted to resolve a trash problem that has resulted in Nazareth, Rapune Hill, Crown Mountain and the Nadir dump sites overflowing with trash and causing outrage.

Sources with knowledge of the situation told the Consortium that Sleepy's Trucking, contracted to do the job, has been refusing to collect the garbage because Waste Management owes the company an undisclosed amount of funds. Melody Rames, WMA spokeswoman, confirmed that

the authority has been having problems with Sleepy's Trucking concerning monies owed to the company.

"We've had some trouble with payments so far and that's a continuation of that story," Ms. Rames said. "It is a continuation of the same issue with the payments that we have been in for a while."

Compounding the matter, two of Sleepy's Trucking employees were threatened by someone in one of the communities the company services, Ms. Rames made known. The employees had refused to collect green waste that was over the limit, which resulted on threats being made against them. Fearing for their lives, the employees have refused to work in said neighborhood.

"It's unacceptable for residents in St. Thomas or anywhere in the Virgin Islands to threaten a waste hauler," Ms. Rames said. "There are rules and regulations for household pickup, and if you're not adhering to that you might not get all of your trash picked up. That does not call for threatening someone's life."

Waste Management is believed to be speaking with another company to do the job in the interim, namely A9 Trucking. But it was not clear if the authority has had any success. Ms. Rames said she was not aware of any conversation between WMA and A9 Trucking.

Asked whether Sleepy's Trucking would see compensation for services provided, Ms. Rames said Waste Management had reached out to Government House. "We're confident that a resolution will be made," she said.

The garbage pileup is an unattractive and repulsive site. Rapune Hill, for example, is highly trafficked, and the uncollected garbage has frustrated some St. Thomas residents.

Attempts to reach Governor Bryan were unsuccessful.

Last Month, waste haulers territory-wide [had threatened to halt](#) collection of trash on the basis that the government needed to make good on the more than \$26 million owed to the companies. The then-pending action was paused after the government provided roughly \$3 million to the haulers, a small amount that had to be shared with over 7 waste haulers along with landfill operators. [At the time](#), James Bates, owner of Bates Trucking, said the amount was a drop in the bucket, but he said he decided to resume waste collection based on promises made by the Bryan administration.