

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Citing Storage Of Hazardous Waste At Rear Of Hospital, CMS Once Again Investigating Juan Luis Hospital

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***Last updated: Tuesday, 12:09 p.m.*** ST. CROIX -- The Juan F. Luis Hospital, only recently having met [conditions of participation](#) from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (C.M.S.), is once again being investigated by the federal agency, after it came to C.M.S.'s attention that hazardous waste was being stored at the rear of the hospital, among other troubling issues.

The C.M.S. notice came on Friday -- the same day Senator Alicia Hansen issued a release chastising Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly for allegedly contacting C.M.S. about

the myriad of issues at the hospital -- and penned by the agency's Division for Survey and Certification Branch Manager, Lauren Reinertsen.

"As a participating provider, you must be in compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations related to the health and safety of patients, proper handling of biomedical wastes and hazardous chemical waste, provision of a sanitary hospital environment to avoid transmission of infections and communicable diseases, and other key requirements," reads the letter.

C.M.S. listed ongoing roof leaks and mold in operating rooms, as well as the storage of hazardous material/biochemical red bag/biohazard/sharps waste in the rear of the hospital. The image seen above is mostly likely what C.M.S. is referring to relative to the storage of hazardous waste, which was captured by The Consortium on Wednesday during an impromptu press conference organized by Mrs. Hansen, to address a matter relating to the [identifying of the deceased by loved ones](#).

In a recent letter to Juan F. Luis Hospital Acting CEO Richard Evangelista, Mrs. Hansen mentioned the storage of hazardous waste in the rear of the hospital, and asked that it be addressed.

"Additionally, as I took a trip to the back of your hospital as part of my investigation into the improper treatment of families identifying their loved ones, I noticed a pile of bags of which I was informed contained hazardous waste. I would like an explanation for why those hazardous bags were sitting in the back of the hospital long enough to create a mountain. The protection of the public and the safety of the employees of the Juan F. Luis hospital should be your top priority," Mrs. Hansen wrote.

Calls placed to Mr. Evangelista, as well as Troy deChabert-Schuster, the vice chairman of the hospital's board, were not returned.

During a board meeting on Friday that was canceled because a quorum was not met, Mr. deChabert-Schuster said the board has been considering retaining an engineering firm whose specialty is hospital construction and renovation, for a complete assessment of the building, which would help hospital officials determine whether to repair the facility, or construct a new one.

"We realize that this building is 35 years old, has been suffering from deferred maintenance for all of those years. As you all know, we have been seeing many more problems arising -- the plumbing, the HVAC, and now the roof situation is becoming more of a challenge, and that's causing lots and lots of problems to the entire hospital," Mr. deCharbert-Schuster said. "And so what we are going to discuss during this meeting is the need to bring in an engineering firm that specializes in hospital construction and renovation to have a complete evaluation done on this building, to determine whether it would be expedient for us to do a major renovation or to petition the local government and the federal government for monies to construct a new hospital."

In its letter to the hospital, C.M.S. requested that a report be submitted within 24 hours.

**Correction: August 29, 2017**

Mr. deChabert-Schuster contacted The Consortium today to correct the record, stating that the hospital is approximately 35 years old. We've updated his quote.

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