

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Limetree Provides Equipment To Help Quench Landfill Fire; Local Agencies Say No Immediate Health Concerns, Give Updates

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Ernice Gilbert **July 01, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, the Waste Management Authority, the VI Fire Service, the Virgin Islands National Guard and the Department of Health on Sunday evening held a press conference to update the public on the status of a massive fire at the Anguilla Landfill that caused black plumes of smoke to pollute atmosphere.

The fire, which officials said started at 3:00 a.m. Sunday, was the talk all day, with some first responders telling The Consortium that arson was suspected. Officials at the press

conference did not rule out the possibility, but did not say whether they had suspected possible foul play either.

Each of the teams represented at the press conference, held on land across the road on the east end of the airport's runway, spoke of their involvement in the response effort. According to W.M.A. Interim Director Adrian Taylor, immediately upon learning of the fire in the wee hours of Sunday morning, W.M.A. notified the V.I. Fire Service. V.I.F.S. Assistant Director Antonio Stevens said when first responders arrived on the scene, four heavy equipment were already destroyed. He said many old vehicles, along with old tires were ablaze as well, partly causing the large plumes of black smoke that filled the St. Croix sky. "We tried to extinguish it initially, but we met some resistance as far as the location and how high the vehicles were, so we had to back out," Mr. Stevens said. He said as the fire continued, explosions were heard. At that point, Fire Service personnel monitored the blaze.

"The fire was contained; it wasn't going anywhere, we just had to continue monitoring to make sure [it didn't get] out of control," Mr. Stevens said. He said while the black smoke was from the tires, the white smoke was a result of metals being burned.

Mr. Stevens reiterated that the fire was contained -- not under control -- as of 6:30 p.m. Sunday. However, on Sunday night the fire appeared to have regained strength, with multiple areas glowing orange while heavy smoke continued to billow, according to videos shared online.

VITEMA, which served as the coordinating agency for the response, said most of the island was not affected, with only the southwest portion realizing impact. The VI National Guard said it activated its civil support team and contacted Puerto Rico for UH-60L water buckets if they were needed. These water buckets are fastened unto helicopters and released on fires. The National Guard also performed air sampling and was awaiting results.

The Department of Health said based on the data and information received, D.O.H. came to the conclusion that as of Sunday evening there was no immediate health concerns to the general public, although D.O.H. urged residents in the Frederiksted area to seek medical attention if they experienced any respiratory symptoms.

Fire Service said 9 trucks were on the scene. In a separate interview, Mr. Stevens told The Consortium that Limetree Bay had provided a major equipment that would allow first responders to draw water directly from the ocean to douse the fire. Shawn Baptiste, owner of Marco Trucking, cleared a path behind the racetrack making room for the Limetree Bay equipment to be transported to the location.

Sunday's fire was the second in approximately one week. The Sunday prior, the Transfer Station was on fire. V.I.F.S. said at the time and again on Sunday that it did not know who or what caused the fire, and that the matter was under investigation.

Feature Image courtesy [DEAR Productions](#)