

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Federal Investigators to Join Probe of Royal Dane Mall Fire

VIC News / **Published On July 09, 2019 09:22 AM /**

Robert Moore **July 09, 2019**



Aerial shot of the fire's destruction on the Royal Dane Mall. (Credit: Herman van der Heide)

ST. THOMAS -- Federal arson investigators are joining the V.I. Fire Service probe into the cause and origin of the fire that destroyed much of the historic Royal Dane Mall on the Charlotte Amalie waterfront.

Fire Service Director Daryl A. George Sr. said arson specialists from the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco and Explosives were enroute to St. Thomas to assist local

investigators. “We have a team on the ground right now,” Mr. George said Monday afternoon. “And we have specialists on the way. At this time, we cannot say much more or provide any further information.”

Fire engulfed the mall late Thursday night. It took nearly 30 firefighters four hours to bring the blaze under control. One firefight sustained a minor injury to the forearm, the V.I.F.S. said. No civilian injuries were reported.

Mr. George would not speculate about the cause of the Royal Dane inferno.

Earlier this year, fires damaged businesses within several blocks of the Royal Dane Mall. A fire was reported in the storage room of the Tavern on the Waterfront restaurant, which is part of the mall. Another fire was reported in a warehouse undergoing renovations several blocks away.

A 2000 New York Times story described the Royal Dane Mall as “ ... a maze of shaded alley with rustic stone walls and interesting boutiques” between the waterfront and Main Street. It is one of the oldest warehouses on St. Thomas, with building dating back 200 years according the V.I. State Historic Preservation Office.

Fewer and fewer boutique shops lined the old-world passageways of the Royal Dane after hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, said St. Thomas attorney Tom Bolt. Mr. Bolt’s law offices were located in the mall until the storms. “Few were still there.”

Among the businesses devastated by the fire was Gladys’ Café, whose authentic Creole dishes are beloved by locals and tourists alike.

Feature Image: Aerial shot of the fire's destruction on the Royal Dane Mall. (Credit: Herman van der Heide)