

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Race Track Gas Station in St. John Reopens Following Fuel Spill

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ST. JOHN -- The Racetrack Gas Station located on the South- East end of St. John, on Southside Road reopened for business Wednesday afternoon following a fuel spill of an unknown amount on Monday morning, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency has announced.

According to the release, initial response by Virgin Islands Fire Service (VIFS) following a call to the St. Thomas 9-1-1 emergency call center received at approximately 10:19 a.m. identified fuel draining down the hill from the Racetrack Gas Station past the St. John Gourmet Market, and running into the gut located at the bridge before the entrance to the Westin St. John Resort.

St. John Administrator Shikima Jones was notified of the event on Monday by VIFS Director Daryl George, and Mrs. Jones contacted a Department of Planning & Natural Resources (DPNR) official on St. John.

Mrs. Jones said because Monday was a holiday, it was difficult to contact some workers. However, she thanked VIFS and DPNR for having individuals available who were able to provide information both on the phone and on the scene. "I was very impressed with the teamwork of our first responders, and how they were able to quickly assess the hazard and work to prevent what could have been a very bad situation," she said, according to VITEMA.

DPNR Hazard Mitigation representatives interviewed Racetrack Gas Station employees who acknowledged a hose from one of the transfer tanks became disconnected during a fuel transfer operation, but employees had since removed the hose to prevent any further fuel spill. On their own initiative, Racetrack Gas Station requisitioned a truck load of sand to cover the fuel spill to minimize any potential hazard to passing vehicles. The fuel spill, covered with sand, laid along the concrete drain ditch all the way down to the gut. VIFS and Westin St. John Resort's engineering manager provided containment booms to prevent any fuel from running further down the mostly dry gut.

VITEMA said Racetrack Gas Station employees spent most of Tuesday cleaning up the contaminated sand in the concrete ditch. DPNR provided Racetrack Gas Station personnel guidelines for cleanup and removal of the contaminated soil in the gut, and employees spent Wednesday morning removing the material from the gut. Following inspection by the VIFS and DPNR, Race Trace gas station resumed normal operations, Wednesday afternoon.

"Environmental hazards are far reaching and do not always show the damage immediately. It is important that we continue to monitor the incident site to further mitigate impact," said DPNR Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol.

VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen, who arrived on St. John Wednesday morning to attend the monthly St. John Emergency Support Council meeting, talked about the incident during the meeting.

"This spill could have been much worse, both for safety of individuals in the immediate area and environmentally. Racetrack Gas Station employees took quick action to prevent an even greater fuel spill. VIFS effectively worked together to protect the safety of individuals and property," he said. "DPNR provided the oversight on the hazard mediation and worked directly with Racetrack Gas Station to ensure proper cleanup requirements were met. And finally, St. John Administrator Jones was kept fully in the loop. Our training in the Incident Command System (ICS), works both on a small scale such as this event on St. John as well as for large events such as hurricanes and earthquakes, which could impact the entire territory."

St. John Deputy Fire Chief Clarence Stephenson, who served as the Incident Commander stated, "I definitely want to thank Administrator Jones, DPNR officials, and the Westin St. John Resort for the all the support over the past several days. Everyone came together and worked towards a common goal of keeping our community safe."

