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Limetree Bay Remains Mum on Thursday Fire at Facility

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Aerial shot of Limetree Bay on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Limetree Bay Ventures, owner of the Limetree Bay refinery and terminal on the south shore of St. Croix have so far remained quiet about a fire at the facility that occurred Thursday.

St. Croix residents living in the vicinity of Limetree were posting on social media about the fire, and the Consortium received a number of messages as well. We reached out to Limetree Bay spokesperson Erica Parsons Thursday who subsequently confirmed the fire: "Yes, there was a fire, and it's out," she wrote. "There were no injuries and we are currently investigating."

Asked to provide more details, Ms. Parsons said a statement would be provided "once more details are available." On Sunday, the Consortium reached out to Ms. Parsons for an update, but so far no further information has been provided. A search of Limetree Bay's social media handle provides an update on the last incident at the facility, which occurred on Dec. 7, but not the Dec. 24 fire.

On Dec. 7, Limetree Bay [described as a "minor refinery upset"](#) an incident that resulted in at least a temporary evacuation of some employees and the mobilization of the facility's fire department.

At about noon Monday, the parking lot area of the company's main office was darkened by what appeared to be smoke, but which Limetree Bay has since said was hydrocarbon and steam. The Consortium was on the scene and saw multiple Limetree Bay vehicles and some employees outside the facility at about 12:22 p.m. Perhaps coincidentally, a V.I. Fire Service fire truck drove past while the incident was still active.

"There was no fire," said Ms. Parsons in response to an inquiry on Dec. 7. At the time, the company [released a statement](#) on its Facebook page: "On Monday at around noon, Limetree experienced a minor refinery upset on Vacuum Distillation Tower #3. This resulted in a plume release of steam containing light hydrocarbon which traveled northwest and quickly dissipated. The cloud which consisted mainly of steam, did result in an odor," wrote the company. "There are no injuries and the unit was shut down out of an abundance of caution. No immediate impact has been identified, but Limetree's Environmental team is continuing to investigate. Limetree Bay sincerely apologizes for the impact to the community."

The hydrocarbon release was seen far and wide and caused some community concern as pictures taken showed plumes of the gas and steam rising high. Other pictures showed the Hess Road leading up to the company's main office area had no visibility, which could have resulted in vehicular accidents. There was no such occurrence, however.

Limetree Bay has been moving swiftly to restart refining in earnest. A Reuters report in October called into question the future of the refinery portion of Limetree Bay as the facility's largest supplier of oil, BP, [according to Reuters](#), said it could pull out of the agreement if Limetree fails to start refining by December.