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Limetree Receiving 'Several Community Complaints' of Strong Odor

Health / **Published On April 26, 2021 03:55 PM /**

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Limetree Bay Terminals By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS CONSORTIUM

The Limetree Bay facility on St. Croix's south shore said Monday that it has been receiving "several community complaints" of a strong odor, a new development that compounds a problem for the refinery that has been building in the past days, with residents living and working on the west side of St. Croix complaining about a foul odor permeating the air.

In a notice issued today, Limetree said, "Please be advised that Limetree Bay has received several community complaints of a strong odor. We are currently investigating and will work with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the Department of Health to post new information as it becomes available."

The original stench, which Limetree Bay said was caused by "an operating upset in the sulfur processing part of the refinery," has been flagged by the V.I. Dept. of Health and the V.I. Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources, both of which have issued correspondences on the matter.

D.O.H. on Saturday [issued a release](#) urging Virgin Islanders with respiratory issues to take caution. The department said exposure to low concentrations of hydrogen sulfide may irritate the eyes, nose, or throat. It may also cause difficulty in breathing for some asthmatics. Respiratory distress or arrest has been observed in people exposed to extremely high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide.

"Any potential threat to the health of the public is always a concern of mine," said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion on Saturday. "As DPNR continues to monitor environmental effects, I encourage you to report symptoms like headaches, nausea, and especially those of a respiratory nature to your healthcare provider."

D.O.H. said D.P.N.R. had confirmed that there were elevated concentrations of H₂S (Hydrogen Sulfide) in the No. 8 flare header at the Limetree Bay Facility. This foul, gaseous smell, which can smell similar to rotten eggs, has permeated throughout the Frederiksted area for the past few days, the health department said. The gas is extremely flammable and highly toxic.

According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, hydrogen sulfide can have mild to severe health impacts. Studies in humans suggest that the respiratory tract and nervous system are the most sensitive targets of hydrogen sulfide toxicity.

Exposure to low concentrations of hydrogen sulfide may also cause headaches, poor memory, tiredness, and balance problems. Brief exposures to high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide can cause loss of consciousness. In most cases, the person regains consciousness without any other effects. However, some individuals may have permanent or long-term effects, such as headaches, poor attention span, poor memory, and poor motor function.