

Image not found or type unknown

Government Says Elevated Levels of Sulfur Dioxide Detected Near Limetree Bay, Limetree Bay Says its Own Tests Found Nothing

Health / **Published On May 10, 2021 04:49 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 10, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



Limetree Bay Energy By. LIMETREE BAY

The government of the Virgin Islands, which has been receiving support from the V.I. National Guard Civil Support Team, the V.I. Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency said late Saturday that VING's Civil Support Team had detected elevated levels of sulfur dioxide gas near Limetree Bay.

But the company Sunday morning contradicted the government's report, stating that its own tests found zero sulfur dioxide gas. "In response to community concerns and to support efforts by the U.S. Virgin Islands Government to identify the source of recent odor complaints, industrial

hygiene specialists at Limetree Bay conducted air monitoring beginning Friday and continuing through Saturday evening at five locations immediately to the West and Northwest of the refinery. This air monitoring detected zero concentration of hydrogen sulfide, zero concentration of sulfur dioxide and zero concentration of hydrocarbons. The results of this monitoring have been shared with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources," said Limetree in a statement.

High concentrations of SO₂ can cause inflammation and irritation of the respiratory system, especially during heavy physical activity. The resulting symptoms can include pain when taking a deep breath, coughing, throat irritation, and breathing difficulties.

The government said late Saturday that VING's Civil Support Team's preliminary reading found elevated quantities of sulfur dioxide in the air near the refinery, which narrowed the investigation to the small industrial corridor on the island's south shore that includes the refinery, the Diageo Rum Distillery, Anguilla Landfill, and the Asphalt Plant north of the landfill. However, readings conducted outside the other facilities Saturday did not provide any elevated readings of harmful chemical constituents, the government said.

Gov't House said the G.V.I. received additional air quality monitoring instruments from the EPA in support of the ongoing investigation. The monitoring instruments arrived in St. Croix Saturday and will be utilized by DPNR and the EPA and will be deployed throughout the island to conduct continuous air quality monitoring in support of confirming the exact source of the odor, according to the release.

The government said VING's Civil Support Team along with V.I. Fire Service HAZMAT unit spent more than four and a half hours on Sunday conducting an extensive investigation within the refinery, including air quality readings and chemical tests. However, Sunday's investigations did not find any elevated levels of sulfur dioxide within the refinery.

Both the CST and Fire Department's HAZMAT team will continue monitoring Sunday evening and Monday morning and will mobilize to conduct spot checks in affected residential areas, Gov't House said.

Last month, Limetree Bay [apologized](#) for a gas release that affected the west side of St. Croix, stating that it would continue to investigate the matter and had taken corrective action. The company said it had experienced "an operating upset in the sulfur processing part of the refinery," and determined that the upset "caused a pressure increase in some equipment, resulting in the opening of a pressure relief valve, and sending an unusually high amount of sulfur-containing gases to the flare, where they were safely burned."

As of Sunday, St. Croix residents downwind from the refinery continued to complain about the odor. "Frederiksted town is being consumed by that nauseated gas once again. Started at 6:45 and still going," a resident told the Consortium Sunday.