

Suddenly No One Knows Where the Foul Stench Affecting Frederiksted is Coming From

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Government officials said during the Bryan administration's weekly press briefing Monday that the investigation into the source of the foul odor impacting the west side of St. Croix continues.

In April, Limetree Bay Terminals confirmed that the odor was from its refinery and [apologized](#) for the gas release.

The refinery said the April 22 gas release was due to "an operating upset in the sulfur processing part of the refinery." The company said it investigated the foul odor "and determined that this 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."

A subsequent but selfsame foul odor on May 6, which resulted in the closure of some schools on St. Croix, was confirmed by Limetree [to be caused by the cleaning of its Coker Unit](#), "which has resulted in light hydrocarbon odors," the refinery said.

But the source of following releases of the same stench is now hard to detect, with Limetree Bay stating early Sunday it detected "zero concentration of hydrogen sulfide, zero concentration of sulfur dioxide and zero concentration of hydrocarbons," after receiving multiple complaints from residents downwind of the stench.

Limetree Bay's Sunday report followed a government report from the V.I. National Guard Civil Support Team, which said Saturday [that it had detected](#) "elevated levels of sulfur dioxide gas near Limetree Bay." By Sunday night, however, 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."

During Monday's press briefing, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach and Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol said the investigation into the source of the odor would continue.

"The island of St. Croix has been confronted in recent weeks with gaseous emissions in the atmosphere that are at best a nuisance that is degrading our enjoyment and quality of life; but at worst presents a clear and present risk to the health of our residents," Mr. Roach said. "Several agencies have spent the weekend tirelessly pursuing the source of those emissions. I must say that I am impressed with the technical capacity possessed by our Virgin Islands Civil Support Team, the Virgin Islands Fire Service Hazmat, and the DPNR Environmental Protection Division."

Those comments from Mr. Roach came after Limetree on two occasions said it was the source of the April 22 and May 6 releases.

Also on Monday, Mr. Oriol said VING's Civil Support Team identified "levels of sulfur dioxide in the atmosphere when conducting preliminary testing on Saturday, May 8th, however did not identify elevated levels at areas adjacent along the industrial complex"

Mr. Oriol's comments differ from the government's original statement on the matter on Saturday. On Saturday, the government said it detected "elevated levels of sulfur dioxide gas near Limetree Bay," although on Sunday none was detected.

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.