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Limetree Bay 'Sincerely Apologizes' for Latest Incident at Refinery, Company Officials No-Show at Townhall

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Limetree Bay Energy late Thursday issued a release apologizing for the massive flare that startled St. Croix residents Wednesday afternoon, sending huge plumes of smoke that included oil particles billowing west of the island. The company said while the investigation continues, the latest incident stemmed from "an upset in the Coker unit", and that as of noon Thursday, "production at all of the process units were discontinued, and Limetree is nearing completion to bring them to a safe, stable condition."

Meanwhile, a Thursday evening town hall organized by the St. Croix Foundation in partnership with CHANT and other nonprofits, where Limetree Bay was invited to participate, included a number of guests from local and federal agencies and well over 200 community participants. Limetree Bay, however, was a no-show, telling organizers that it would not engage at this time.

The event's large attendance spoke to the concerns of St. Croix residents relative to the potential impacts of the refinery's restart on the island, with four incidents being recorded to date since oil refining [commenced on February 1](#). Relative to the latest release, the company said Thursday it "deployed teams to several communities west of the facility to assess the impact of Wednesday's release, and field representatives have begun information gathering and property inspections."

Impact has been identified thus far to neighborhoods as far west as Estate Whim, Limetree Bay said its investigation revealed. The company said residents who may have been affected by the oil release "are reminded not to consume the water from their cisterns," and that "daily water distribution has been established for affected communities."

Representatives of the Bryan administration, among them Dept. of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion and Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol, said the administration has expressed concern to Limetree, [echoing a statement](#) Governor Bryan issued early Thursday. EPA administrator Michael Regan following the latest failure expressed frustration. "The Limetree Bay facility in the USVI has informed EPA it is temporarily suspending production," he said on [Twitter](#) Wednesday afternoon. "The repeated incidents at the refinery are unacceptable. EPA has a team on St. Croix and is committed to taking all necessary action to ensure people's health and safety is protected."

The Coker unit "upset" comes at a time when Limetree was already facing heightened scrutiny for foul smells that the company has twice confirmed emanated from the refinery. And it follows [a notice of violation](#) the company was levied with by the EPA for alleged violations of the Clean Air Act for failing to operate five sulfur dioxide (SO₂) monitors in the surrounding communities of Christiansted, and the associated weather tower on the facility's grounds.

On Thursday, Limetree apologized. "Limetree sincerely apologizes for the impact this has caused the community and will continue to assess the impact and advise if additional neighborhoods are affected," the company said. "If you think your property may have been impacted by the release, please contact Limetree's Incident hotline at (340) 692-3199."