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Bryan Says Manhole Near Airport Emitting Odor Has Been Covered. 'All Evidence We Have Lead to Manhole For Most Part'

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EPA's Monitoring Station 1 is located on this hill in Estate Anguilla (gov't property), which is situated across the road from the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport's runway on the east side. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan said Monday that the manhole the Environmental Protection Agency [discovered on Thursday](#) at the Anguilla Estate near the Henry E. Rohlson Airport has been closed, and since then, "the readings emitting from there have gone down, and we have had no real complaints over the weekend from there and the readings they've taken thus far show really decreased levels of [hydrogen sulfide]."

"They have closed it," the governor told the Consortium during a brief call following his Monday press event. The territory's leader further stated that the discovery of the manhole "is very significant," and said while investigations will continue, "the identification of an open manhole at the Anguilla Landfill may have solved the mysteries that was puzzling our investigatory team." Mr. Bryan said his administration would continue to work with the EPA, Limetree and other partners until affected residents of St. Croix no longer have to deal with the gaseous smells.

On Friday, the Consortium reported that the EPA on Thursday afternoon notified the local government that it had found at least one source of the gaseous odor that has been affecting St. Croix. According to the EPA, the smell — strong hydrogen sulfide-like odors — was emanating from an uncovered sewer manhole located atop a hill across the road from the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport runway, facing east.

The EPA has installed five monitoring stations around the Limetree Bay facility in an effort to monitor the strong odors affecting the island, and to determine a source. Monitor Station 1 is located at Estate Anguilla near the [drag racing facility](#), which is across the airport's runway facing east. See a map showing the monitoring stations [here](#).

The EPA said it used a Jerome Model J605 monitor and detected hydrogen sulfide at 3.75 ppm, and further confirmed the detection using a MultiRae monitor at the top of the manhole, measuring hydrogen sulfide at 1.1 ppm. "Readings on these instruments at or above 1.0 ppm are considered elevated and merit further investigation," the EPA said.

The agency said a sampling tube for a Single Point Monitor was lowered into the manhole and detected a reading of greater than 10 ppm, the upper detection limit for the device. The EPA [said](#) it "immediately notified the Virgin Islands government and will assist the local authorities as they determine how to address this matter."

Later on Thursday, the EPA detected another ten-minute average reading again on Monitor 1 located west of the Limetree Bay refinery on the Anguilla Estate. The reading "showed a level that exceeded a threshold value set for hydrogen sulfide, which EPA refers to as a Tier 1 Action Level," according to the notification from the agency. "All of the action levels established are based on ten-minute average concentrations. The Tier 1 Action Level for hydrogen sulfide is 0.01 ppm, and the highest level monitored by EPA was approximately 0.02 ppm measured at approximately 8:45 p.m. Thursday.

"This approximately 0.02ppm level was measured at Monitor Station 1, west of the facility. The elevated levels monitored by EPA started on May 20 a little after 8:30pm. EPA immediately notified the Virgin Islands government and ATSDR," the EPA continued.

This latest development comes on the heels of a surfeit of complaints against Limetree from St. Croix residents in the form of at least three class action lawsuits — [including over 200 residents](#) in a suit from the Law Office of Lee Rohn and Associates.

Limetree [shut down refining following a May 12 flare incident](#) and the EPA on May 14 [ordered a 60-day halt](#). Since then, Limetree said it has been performing cleanup on properties on the west side of St. Croix, investigating the cause of the incident, and taking several other steps — including hiring an independent firm to audit the refinery and determine what caused the latest occurrence.

Limetree CEO Jeffery Rinker during a Tuesday meeting with senators at the plant, said while the firm had yet to determine the cause of the flare, preliminary findings pointed to an issue at the

Coker unit where a bypass valve that was supposed to be locked during the phase when the Coker unit was being quenched, was not — a finding that Mr. Rinker said confounded investigators. Mr. Rinker said it had yet to be determined why the valve was not locked or who removed the lock. He said there's a highly controlled procedure that includes documentation review before the bypass valve can be unlocked, and that during a March review of the Coker unit, documentation shows that the valve was locked, which was also verified in the field. However, on May 12 when the unusually large flare incident occurred, the bypass valve was unlocked.

"We're going to be shutdown until some independent experts tell us that we've fixed the problem and the refinery is safe to start and to operate compliantly and to operate without incidents," Mr. Rinker said. He said the company's primary goal was to get the refinery in a safe condition for an extended shutdown and to continue performing cleanup. Contractors have already started laying off employees as refinery operations wind down, which will impact the local economy.