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Pinnacle Lays Off 100 Employees as Impact of Limetree Bay Refinery Shutdown Starts Hitting Home

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ST. CROIX — Pinnacle Services LLC, which has employed hundreds at Limetree Bay, on Wednesday laid off 100 employees from a variety of work disciplines tied to the refinery, which on Monday announced an indefinite shutdown.

Among the 100 people made redundant were administrative assistants, engineers, consultants, foremen, and laborers. In essence, if your employment at Pinnacle was tied to the refinery and you had no terminal-related roles, you were laid off or on the list to be let go.

Pinnacle is one of many Limetree Bay contractors winding down their refinery operations and in doing so being forced to make redundant employees. Contractors last Friday [laid off 300 individuals](#) ahead of another 276 employees that Limetree will make redundant [effective Sept. 19](#).

The mood at Pinnacle was said to be somber as the reality of the situation on St. Croix hits home, and it portends a dismal economic outlook for St. Croix, whose economic revival was largely driven by Limetree Bay's oil refining operation that led to the employment of hundreds of individuals lifting many into the middle class and driving commerce that trickled into and helped sustain other businesses.

On Wednesday night, the parking lot at the east gate of the facility once packed with vehicles was all but empty, with businesses that setup shop along the Hess Road from the Sunny Isle stoplights set to be negatively impacted by the shutdown.

Governor Albert Bryan said Monday his administration [expects up to eight hundred jobs to be lost](#) as a result of the indefinite shutdown. The governor estimated up to six hundred direct jobs and up to two hundred indirect forms of employment will be eliminated.

Mr. Bryan, speaking of the somber news during his weekly Covid-19 brief pressing, said, "If we didn't have enough on our plate, the latest news brings back haunting memories of the fallout of 2012." He said his administration received news from Limetree Bay of the indefinite halt to refining at 6:00 a.m. Monday, at which point he notified Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett.

"We realize as an administration that there are several hundred households on St. Croix that will feel the impact of this significant decision," said Mr. Bryan. Even so, the governor said his administration was equipped to help those being made redundant navigate the fallout.

"As a former Labor commissioner during the closure of the [HOVENSA] refinery, I helped over 1,200 people find their way after they closed," Mr. Bryan said. The governor said he witnessed first-hand "the anxiety and the economic turmoil" former employees of the HOVENSA facility and by extension their families suffered as a result of the 2012 closure.

The territory's leader said the V.I. Dept. of Labor was in the process of activating its rapid response team in preparation for the high volume of unemployment applications it is expected to receive. He also said the government would examine its contract with Limetree and determine next steps relative to the announcement's legal standing.

He announced V.I. government job fairs to be held June 22nd at the St. Croix Educational Complex and June 24th at the Tutu Park Mall. "If is one thing we have in this territory is a need for talent and a need for employees, so we're going to have to make sure that we get these people back to work quickly," he said.

On the possibility of a restart, Mr. Bryan stated, "At this point they do not have any idea when the refinery will restart or if it will restart at all."

Elsewhere, the governor said the V.I. Dept. of Labor had executed a contract with ICF Incorporated to implement a \$9 million workforce development program aimed at training over six hundred individuals, including four hundred in construction, seventy-five in administrative services, and one hundred and sixty-five on-the-job training in other industries.

Limetree Bay Energy on Monday morning announced the indefinite suspension of its plan to restart the refinery due to severe financial constraints.

The company said since the temporary suspension of its petroleum refining and processing operations on May 12, 2021, Limetree Bay has been working to obtain capital to assist in its

restart efforts.

“This was an extremely difficult decision for us, and we are truly saddened to announce suspension of our restart plans for the refinery,” said Jeff Rinker, Limetree Bay CEO. “Our personnel have demonstrated tremendous commitment and dedication in restarting the refinery, and we continue to be proud of their hard work. Unfortunately, this is our only option, given the extreme financial constraints facing the company.”

Limetree Bay said it will begin preparing the refinery for an extended shutdown, which includes safely purging gases from all of the units and removing any residual oil and products in the lines.

Limetree Bay’s oil storage terminal will not be affected by the decision to suspend the restart of the refinery and will continue in operation. That operation, however, employs less than 100 people.

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