

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Labor Activates Rapid Response Effort Following Mass Layoffs at Limetree Bay to Help Displaced Workers

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ST. CROIX — The V.I. Department of Labor has announced the available of services for individuals recently impacted by layoffs — including the hundreds made redundant following the indefinite shutdown of oil refining at Limetree Bay — to assist both businesses and individuals under Rapid Response.

According to the labor department, through Rapid Response, the state or designated entity delivers services to help dislocated workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible.

"Individuals impacted by the recent Limetree Bay layoffs are invited to attend the Rapid Response Information Session on Friday, June 25, 2021, from 3 pm – 6 pm at the Career and Technical Education Center," D.O.L. said in a release issued Thursday night. CTEC is located at the St. Croix Educational Complex facility.

"Attendees will receive information regarding career services, filing for unemployment insurance, employment opportunities, training, and financial assistance. Representatives from government agencies, banking institutions and employers will be onsite," D.O.L. said in its release.

Rapid Response is authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act at 134(a)(2)(A). The Rapid Response Regulations are found at 20 CFR 682.300.

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.