

The Virgin Islands Consortium

EPA to End Odor Monitoring Around Limetree Bay as Refining Operations Shut Down; Plant Barred From Cleansing Units Without EPA Permission

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The Environmental Protection Agency will end its air monitoring effort around the Limetree Bay facility as the company has ended its oil refining operations, EPA made known Friday.

"Because the Limetree Bay refinery has completely ceased its refining operations and is not currently a potential source of significant air pollution, EPA will cease operating its monitors, effective June 29," the EP said [in a Friday update](#).

"EPA is stopping operating its monitors that had been set up to measure sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) emissions from the facility. These monitors have been operating since May 14, 2021 to measure SO₂ and H₂S after a series of incidents at the refinery that endangered the health and welfare of nearby communities," the federal agency stated.

EPA on June 16 directed Limetree Bay to install and operate eighteen air monitors near the refinery and in the surrounding area. The agency said it expects that at least ten of those monitors would need to be installed prior to any potential restart of refining operations at the facility.

On Thursday, the EPA told Limetree Bay through a letter addressed to CEO Jeffrey Rinker and Neil Morgan, the now-shuttered refinery's general manager who [was only recently hired](#), that the refinery was not allowed to cleanse refining units — which must be performed during a shutdown operation — without the approval of the EPA. Limetree Bay, [after being shutdown by Governor Albert Bryan](#) on May 12, [was then ordered by the EPA to halt refinery operations](#) for sixty days.

In its notice to the public [announcing the indefinite shutdown](#) of oil refining operations, Limetree Bay said part of the preparation for an extended shutdown "includes safely purging gases from all of the units and removing any residual oil and products in the lines."

Mr. Bryan has said during multiple press briefings that following [a flare incident](#) on May 12, he told Limetree officials to immediately halt operations or face his wrath. "When the last incident occurred with the fire, I called the refinery and told them to shut it down otherwise they're going to have hell to pay with me. They did," Mr. Bryan said during a press event Monday, reiterating what he'd said during a previous press briefing.

The EPA said it deployed two types of "fixed" monitors that were installed around the Limetree Bay facility. These monitors were installed at the same locations as the "federal reference monitors." The EPA monitors measured sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S). These monitors were not the same as the federal reference monitors required to determine whether a federal air standard was being met, according to the agency.

Hundreds of jobs have been lost as a result of the refinery shutdown, and Limetree Bay will let go 271 of its direct employees effective Sept. 19. 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.

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.

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.

Limetree said since the temporary suspension of its petroleum refining and processing operations on May 12, it had 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 Mr. Rinker. “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’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.