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Limetree Bay to Test Flare This Weekend as it Prepares For Extended Shutdown of Refinery

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Limetree Bay By. VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Limetree Bay Refinery said Friday that it plans to begin testing flare #8 this weekend after completing repair work on it, as the refinery commences the first phase of its extended shutdown.

In a release, the company said the Environmental Protection Agency approved a procedure to facilitate the shutdown. "This testing includes lighting multiple pilots on the flare, and during this process, a small flame may be visible at the tip of the flare," Limetree Bay said. "The testing is necessary as flaring is a normal part of the process to safely remove oil and gases from the refinery in preparation for the extended shutdown period."

Limetree Bay Refining will shutdown operations come Sept. 19, letting go its remaining employees, idle the refinery and proceed with its bankruptcy filing. The company is also hopeful that an investor will be interested in purchasing the refinery, but even if that were to happen, the process to restart would most likely take years.

During a press conference [on July 20](#), Limetree Bay CEO Jeffrey Rinker told the Consortium the company had been in discussions with the EPA about removing oil currently in the units as it looks to completely shutdown the facility.

Mr. Rinker said the refinery was a responsible member of the community and that it always tried to be a good neighbor. He highlighted that Limetree Bay has provided "good, safe jobs" to people in the local community, and that "over 90 percent of the employees of the refinery are U.S. Virgin Islands residents."

He said despite the refinery's best efforts, there were some operational incidents such as detectable smells and unusually loud noises. "And on two occasions we had upsets at the Coker and the refinery that released an oily mist that put particles of oil unto the properties downwind of the refinery."

The CEO made no excuses for those incidents, stating bluntly, "They shouldn't have happened. They're unacceptable." However, in each case Limetree Bay went into the community "to address the impacts and try to make things right with the neighbors that we affected, along with taking corrective action inside the refinery to correct the cause of the incidents," he said.