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# EPA Sends Letter to Owners of Limetree Bay Refinery Informing Them of Potential Need For Year-Long Permitting Process Before Restart of Refining

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Tuesday that it sent a letter to West Indies Petroleum Limited and Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation — the new owners of the former Limetree Bay refinery on St. Croix — informing them that, based on the information currently available to EPA, there are strong indicators to suggest that the refinery must obtain a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permit prior to any potential startup of refinery operations.

In the letter, seen [here](#), EPA asks for additional information regarding past and future changes to processes and emission units at the refinery. The information will enable the EPA to evaluate this issue further, before making a final determination regarding the need for a PSD permit, the agency

said.

“As EPA continues to obtain additional information to reach a final decision on the need for this particular permit, we remain committed to ensuring that any potential restart of this facility would occur safely and in accordance with environmental laws,” said Lisa F. Garcia, EPA Regional Administrator. “Given the concerning incidents at this facility that previously endangered the health of the people who live and work in surrounding communities, we will carefully review the information we receive and any new plans before determining our next steps in the permitting process.”

According to the EPA, a PSD permit applies to new major air pollution sources or major modifications at existing sources that result in an increase of certain pollutant emissions (for example, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, or nitrogen oxide) where the area in which the source is located attains or meets EPA’s national air quality health standards. In its letter, EPA poses a series of questions to the new owners, seeking answers that will help determine whether the refinery needs to obtain a PSD permit.

The purpose of the PSD permit program is to protect public health and welfare and ensure that new air pollution sources or changes at existing air pollution sources do not degrade air quality. PSD permits are complex and specific to a given facility, the EPA said. In general, they require the facility to meet emissions limits that would be achieved by using the best available air pollution control technology and perform an air quality impact analysis, with an opportunity for public review and comment. If such a permit is required for the refinery on St. Croix, it must be obtained prior to startup of that facility.

In May 2021, EPA ordered the owners at the time, Limetree Bay Refining, LLC and Limetree Bay Terminals, LLC, to stop refinery operations following a series of excess emissions incidents that included exceedances of limits for sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, endangering the health and welfare of nearby communities. In response to these incidents, EPA ordered the refinery to pause all operations until the agency could be assured that this facility can operate safely and in accordance with laws that protect public health.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to make a permit decision on a PSD permit application within 1 year after the application is complete as determined by the EPA. The EPA regulations define a complete application as one that "contains all of the information necessary for processing the application."

Governor Albert Bryan recently told the Consortium that Russia's war in Ukraine, which led America to ban all Russian fuel imports was working in favor of the Limetree Bay Refinery. The new refinery owners told the governor that the company has started rehiring laid-off employees and that its regulatory process with the EPA was making progress.

"This is really good for the refinery and their startup because the U.S. went to Venezuela to talk to them about their crude, and our refinery was built to [process Venezuelan] crude so they're in a very good position now," Mr. Bryan told the Consortium [during a recent interview](#).