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Experts Flown in to Help Suppress Smoldering Petroleum Coke at St. Croix Refinery

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The Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation Refinery on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation, the new owners of the refinery on the south shore of St. Croix, announced Sunday that experts arrived on St. Croix Thursday as part of PHRT's response to a pile of petroleum coke that was slowly smoldering since Thursday.

According to PHRT, around 4:20 a.m. Thursday, an automatic alarm system was activated inside one of the coke storage domes at the facility, and responding employees discovered a pile of petroleum coke slowly smoldering.

Employees immediately set up fire hose water spray nozzles inside the coke dome to cool the material, PHRT said. According to the release, water is being sprayed 24 hours daily and experts in petroleum coke handling were flown in on Friday to help with the logistics of completely suppressing the smoldering pile of petroleum coke safely and expeditiously.

Petroleum coke is a solid fuel that resembles charcoal, PHRT explained. This particular petroleum coke pile in the dome was left over from the brief operation of the Coker unit in 2021 under Limetree Bay Refining ownership, according to the release.

Port Hamilton's fence-line air monitoring network has not detected any impacts but will continue to monitor day and night, the company said. "The safety of the workers and the public remains Port Hamilton's first priority," it added.

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