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A to Z Paint Supply, Open For 33 Years on St. Croix, is Destroyed by Fire. 'I Lost Everything.'

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Ernice Gilbert **August 11, 2022**

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The building that housed A to Z Paint Supply, Nuvo Construction LLC, and Dynamic Tax Solutions in La Grande Princesse on St. Croix, was destroyed by fire on Wed. Aug. 10, 2022. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

A to Z Paint Supply, a three-decades old business located in La Grande Princesse on St. Croix, was destroyed by fire early Wednesday morning, according to the V.I. Fire Service.

Fire Service Asst. Director Antonio Stevens told the Consortium that at about 4:08 a.m. Wednesday, the 911 Emergency Call Center received notification of a structure fire in La Grande Princesse, and the Fire Service's C Company was dispatched to the location at 4:09 a.m.

Three Fire Service Units responded to the scene and upon arrival found the building — which along with A to Z Paint Supply also housed the offices of Nuvo Construction, LLC and Dynamic Tax Solutions — completely engulfed in flames.

Additional units from all other stations responded to assist along with a V.I. Water and Power Authority crew.

At about 6:53 a.m. Wednesday, the fire was brought under control and contained to the structure, according to Mr. Stevens, and there were no injuries to Fire Service personnel or other structures. A total of 22,000 gallons of water was used to extinguish the blaze.

Mr. Stevens said an investigation was immediately launched and interviews with the owners and occupants of the building were ongoing. A total of three stations responded with 15 personnel and 3 apparatuses, he said.

The cause of the fire was unknown as of Wednesday.

A to Z Paint Supply owner, Larry Chipman, spoke to the Consortium and said he was still in shock as he tried to process the loss of his business, which opened just after Hurricane Hugo in Sept. 1989.

"I didn't want to go out this way," he said. Mr. Chipman said his systems were all Windows operated and were not backed up on any cloud-based platforms. "I lost all my billing information, all the invoices of people who picked up paint and owe me money, it's so much of it that I can't sort it out. Everything burned. All the evidence burned, it's gone... I could only hope that customers are honest enough to pay... All my mementos of 30 plus years, personal stuff, it's all dust."

A V.I. Fire Service inspector is scheduled to inspect the building Thursday to produce an incident report, Mr. Chipman said.

A to Z Paint Supply was an insured business, and Mr. Chipman has already met with the insurance company, which he said is currently awaiting a report from the V.I. Fire Service. Mr. Chipman said he is already considering reopening the business at another location, though it would take several months to get off the ground.

"It's just hard to find another place," Mr. Chipman said with devastation in his voice and tone. "I would have to order all new equipment and that would take time, so it's basically starting all over again."