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Fire Breaks Out on Coke Conveyor System at St. Croix Refinery, Firefighter Injured; Port Hamilton Says Situation Under Control; EPA, DPNR Notified

Business / **Published On August 21, 2022 04:28 PM /**

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Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation announced Sunday afternoon that a fire broke out at the refinery Sunday morning within the petroleum coke conveyor loading system, located outside and above the Coke Storage Dome.

The company said its emergency response personnel responded immediately. The V.I. Fire Service along with Ocean Point Terminals were also notified and their emergency response personnel and equipment responded to the scene, according to PHRT.

"At the time of this press release, the fire is under control. Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation personnel also patrolled neighboring communities with air monitoring equipment.

All air monitoring results were reported normal," the company said.

The Consortium had reached out to Port Hamilton after learning on Sunday morning that heavy smoke emanating from the refinery was billowing west of St. Croix. The event was noticeable enough to cause residents downwind of the refinery to express concern.

PHRT said one of its firefighters was treated for a minor burn. It also said that the V.I. Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard were notified of the incident.

The EPA on Friday sent a letter to PHRT giving the company 14 days to respond with detailed information on the cause of [the smoldering at the Coke Dome](#), which the refinery announced on Aug. 4. Fermin Rodriguez, Port Hamilton VP and refinery manager told the Consortium that the company was preparing a response. "We're going to respond to all the questions that they asked" before the deadline, he said Sunday.

Two weeks ago Port Hamilton said it brought in experts to help extinguish the smoldering. 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.