

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Impact of Fire at Former Villa Morales Facility Limited to Common Area, VIHFA Says

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The former Villa Morales Restaurant, now a facility used to support the homeless, was set on fire on Mon. Jan. 2, 2023. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

The V.I. Housing Finance Authority on Wednesday said that the V.I. Fire Service was able to contain [a fire at the former Villa Morales facility](#) in Estate Whim Monday night.

VIHFA Interim Executive Director Dayna Clendinen thanked the first responders who she said "worked quickly Monday evening to contain and extinguish" the fire at the facility, which now provides emergency shelter beds, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for the homeless after it was purchased by VIHFA in 2019.

According to the authority, because of the efforts of first responders the impact was limited to the common area, leaving the majority of the units intact and the occupants uninjured. "With substantially less damage than expected, VIHFA is working with its facility manager Community First to get residents moved back in before the end of the week," Ms. Clendinen said.

The incident on Monday further underscores the need for additional emergency housing across the territory that could fill in when residents are in need, the authority said.

Work will begin at VIHFA's Campo Rico housing property, along with the Anna's Hope community, during the first quarter of 2023, adding to the number of units available, Ms. Clendinen said.

According to V.I.P.D. Director of Communications Glen Dratte, the 911 Emergency Call Center received a call at 7:06 p.m. Monday from a woman reporting that a male was pouring gasoline inside the Community First Office in Whim, Frederiksted and lit the office area on fire. The building was fully engulfed.

Mr. Dratte said the V.I. Fire Service Responded to the scene along with the V.I.P.D. The blaze was eventually brought under control and extinguished.

According to police, while no injuries were reported, a suspect was taken into custody.