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Department of Labor Responds to Kmart West Closure With Investigation to Ensure Protection of Workers' Rights

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Shoppers on St. Croix gathered at Kmart West on Nov. 24, 2018 to catch Black Friday sales. By. ERNICE GILBERT/V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Department of Labor has responded to [recent news](#) about the closure of the Transform KM LLC (Kmart West) store by announcing an investigation.

Commissioner Gary Molloy emphasized that the department would ensure that the rights and well-being of the up to 75 affected employees are protected in accordance with prevailing labor laws and regulations.

"We are deeply concerned about the potential impact of the Kmart West closure on the affected individuals and their families," stated Molloy. "Our priority is to ensure their rights are upheld and they receive the support they need during this challenging time."

The investigation will examine compliance with laws including the Virgin Islands Plant Closing Act, Title 24 Sections 471-478, and the Worker Adjustment and Training Notification Act (WARN) of 1988.

The Labor Department urged all affected employees to familiarize themselves with these laws and to reach out to the Labor Relations Division of the department for guidance and support throughout this transition period. DOL said it stands ready to provide assistance, answer questions, and address concerns related to the closure and the protections guaranteed by law.

First, rumors began to circulate that employees of Kmart West on St. Croix had been given retirement packages. Days later, in-store posters appeared, reminding customers that June 5 was the deadline for returns, and that several affiliated services – Western Union, layaways, money orders and lottery purchases – would be closed permanently. Soon after, a large banner appeared atop the entrance of the mall: "Store Closing," it reads succinctly.

The store opened on St. Croix at the Sunshine Mall on June 30, 1993 — approximately 30 years ago — and was at its peak one of the most visited stores on the island. The mall itself used to be one of two locations on St. Croix where shoppers would flock not only to buy items, but to spend time and enjoy entertainment. The other location, Sunny Isle, though still highly trafficked has seen its heyday fade, a trend that isn't unique to St. Croix as malls across the U.S. have suffered loss with the advent of online shopping.

The store's closing was listed on the [website](#) of consulting firm SB360 Capital Partners, along with five other Sears stores on the mainland that are shutting down.