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United Steelworkers Union Urges Bryan to Address 'Perilous' Working Conditions at St. Croix BMV; Calls for Emergency Meeting With Stakeholders

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Staff Consortium **August 10, 2023**

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Unsafe conditions spark employee protest at St. Croix Motor Vehicle Bureau on Wednesday, Aug. 2 and Thursday Aug. 3, 2023. (Credit: V.I. Consortium) By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The United Steelworkers on Thursday made an urgent plea to Governor Albert Bryan to immediately relocate its union members working under dire conditions at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles on St. Croix.

Currently, 26 members from USW Local 8248 and USW Local 9489 are positioned at the Patrick Sweeney Police Headquarters, working for the BMV in trailers that are structurally deficient.

These dedicated workers, along with the citizens they serve, are faced with hazardous conditions daily, the union said. Crumbling floors, walls marred by water damage, ceilings plagued with mold, and a termite infestation make the BMV offices not only an unfit working environment but also a potential health hazard, it further stated.

Speaking on the matter, USW District 9 Director Daniel Flippo, who oversees tens of thousands of union members in the U.S. Virgin Islands and seven Southern states, stated, “The workers have a collective bargaining agreement that mandates the government to ensure a safe working environment. They have the right to enforce the government’s obligations should they find themselves in dangerous conditions.”

Flippo added, “These workers are committed to delivering essential services and are eager to continue their duty towards the public. However, this can only be achieved if the government rises to the occasion, fulfilling its responsibilities. This, in turn, would also safeguard the public visiting these offices.”

In light of the current conditions, USW is seeking an immediate emergency meeting with Governor Bryan, alongside other legislators and officials, aiming to address and mitigate the health and safety risks posed by the current state of the BMV offices, the union said.

“It’s unthinkable for the government to expose its citizens to such peril,” expressed Flippo. “We are prepared to work alongside Governor Bryan to identify a practical solution that ensures the safety and wellbeing of both the workers and the general public.”

For context, USW is a leading union representing 850,000 workers from various sectors including metals, mining, pulp and paper, rubber, chemicals, glass, auto supply, and energy production, as well as an increasing population of workers in the public sector and service occupations.