

Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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The Honorable
Angel Bolques, Jr.
Senator-At-Large
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunication
Subcommittee on Energy & Infrastructure Development



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MEDIA PRESS RELEASE

EPA Uncovers Unreported Liquefied Petroleum Gas at STX Refinery, Raises Significant Environmental Concerns; Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation's Non-Compliance Discovered

ST. CROIX, VIRGIN ISLANDS - The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region II, during a recent inspection, made a critical discovery at the St. Croix refinery operated by Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation. This inspection revealed approximately 32,500 gallons of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) that had not been reported previously, signifying a major oversight in regulatory compliance.

At a virtual community meeting held on Thursday, EPA Region 2 Response and Prevention Branch Chief Doug Kodama detailed the findings, underscoring the serious nature of the violation by Port Hamilton. The EPA's ability to effectively monitor and ensure safety is heavily reliant on accurate reporting from facilities. This unreported LPG, a fuel gas containing hydrocarbon mixtures, usually odorless without specific additives, was not disclosed in the inventory provided by Port Hamilton, leading to significant concerns about the refinery's commitment to transparency and environmental safety.

This revelation follows a sequence of corrective actions initiated in 2022, after a 'Clean Air Act' general duty clause inspection identified concerning areas. An order of consent was subsequently issued to Port Hamilton, resulting in the removal of hazardous materials,

including anhydrous ammonia, amines, and LPG. However, the recent discovery of additional LPG casts doubts on the thoroughness of Port Hamilton's compliance and reporting practices.

In response to these developments, Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques Jr. expressed deep concern over the refinery's practices and the potential implications for environmental safety. "The discovery of unreported LPG at the Port Hamilton facility is not only a breach of trust and responsibility but also poses a significant risk to our environment and community. Port Hamilton must adhere strictly to environmental laws and regulations. This incident highlights the need for more stringent oversight and transparency in the operations of such facilities. We must ensure that environmental protection remains a paramount priority in all industrial activities," stated Senator Bolques.

EPA Region 2 Administrator Lisa F. Garcia emphasized the stringent requirements for the refinery's potential restart, including a 90-day advance notice and detailed information submission to the EPA and the federal District Court.

The recent findings have raised additional concerns regarding the possibility of other undisclosed materials at the refinery. The EPA is addressing these apprehensions with utmost seriousness, as reflected in Kodama's commitment to a comprehensive finalization of the inspection report. The goal is to ensure that no further undisclosed materials are present at the facility, prioritizing environmental safety and adherence to regulations.

The EPA is in the final stages of completing the inspection report, with plans to release a version to the public shortly. The agency is dedicated to maintaining rigorous oversight and ensuring that Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation meets all environmental laws and standards.

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