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EPA Conditionally Approves Plans to Remove Dangerous Chemicals from Refinery on St. Croix

EPA Will Oversee Work On-Site and Monitor Air Quality to Ensure People's Safety

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St. Croix, VI (February 9, 2023) – EPA has conditionally approved plans to safely remove dangerous chemicals from systems at the refinery on St. Croix. These plans are part of a legally binding agreement EPA entered into on December 5 requiring Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation LLLP (PHRT) to remove anhydrous ammonia, liquified petroleum gas (LPG) and amine solutions that currently pose risks at the facility. EPA will oversee the work, which will begin with preparation work starting this month. Repairs to the ammonia system are scheduled to begin in early March, and chemical removal is scheduled to begin in early April and expected to be complete sometime this summer.

"This is a critical step forward in safely removing harmful chemicals from the facility and away from the community and workers," **said EPA Regional Administrator Lisa F. Garcia.** "EPA will be there every step of the way, providing oversight of the safe removal to ensure people's protection. We will provide the public with updates and make real-time air monitoring data available to the community."

EPA discussed, reviewed and approved the detailed plans for work associated with the agreement that will begin with removal of ammonia. PHRT contractors will remove the anhydrous ammonia by transferring the ammonia to specially designed shipping containers. The contractors will then ship these containers off island for sale or proper disposal and will purge and treat any remaining ammonia vapors from the system under closed conditions to prevent vapors from escaping. EPA has approved the plan to remove the ammonia, which provides PHRT, and contractors make repairs to the system before beginning the removal work.

After the ammonia removal work is complete, contractors will transfer the LPG into shipping containers for shipment off-island for sale as useable product or for proper disposal, if necessary. Contractors will depressurize any remaining hydrocarbon vapors in the containers and in process equipment and piping and transfer it to a thermal oxidizer for destruction. The contractors will use nitrogen to remove any residual hydrocarbon vapors from the system,

which will again be routed to the thermal oxidizer. EPA has approved the plan to remove the LPG, on the condition that PHRT and its contractors apply for and comply with necessary air permits from the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) associated with the removal of the LPG.

To remove the amines, contractors will transfer the amine liquid containing hydrogen sulfide into appropriate shipping containers that will be shipped off-island for sale or proper disposal. EPA has approved the plan to remove the amine liquid, on the condition that PHRT and its contractors accept EPA's removal plan recommendations, make repairs to the system before beginning the work, and apply for and comply with necessary air permits from DPNR associated with the removal of the LPG.

Once liquids have been transferred from the amine units, the contractors will chemically clean and rinse the equipment and purge all amine units with nitrogen gas until the system is free of all residual amine, hydrogen sulfide and hydrocarbon.

EPA will oversee the work to remove the chemicals and will conduct around-the-clock air monitoring to ensure people's safety. EPA will display the real-time air monitoring results on a website that will be linked from **EPA's** refinery on St Croix Website. The air monitors will measure chemicals associated with the substances required by the order to be removed. EPA will place air monitors at the refinery fence line and at locations within the nearby community. EPA emergency response experts will also use handheld monitors to conduct air monitoring within communities, as appropriate.

PHRT and its contractors developed the plans to remove chemicals after careful consideration of multiple removal options and with input from EPA technical and legal experts. EPA has already had experts on the ground for parts of the plan development, will oversee the work at the facility, and will have emergency response experts working nearby through the duration of the work. EPA will continue to coordinate closely with the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands emergency management and environmental experts. The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) is the coordinating agency of the U.S. Virgin Islands for emergency readiness and response.

EPA plans to host a community meeting in the coming weeks to discuss these plans. EPA has a toll-free hotline at (866) 462-4789 for general inquiries and to report odors. Environmental emergencies, such as spills and releases, should be reported to the National Response Center at (800) 424-8802, which is staffed 24 hours a day by the U.S. Coast Guard. The public should call 911 for all life-threatening situations.

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