

AUGUST 11, 2021

USING & MAINTAINING CISTERNs

This factsheet is meant to be an informational resource for communities using cisterns fed by rainwater catchment systems in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not regulate household cisterns, we are sharing this information about how best to use and maintain them.

The most common concern with household cistern water is the possible presence of bacteria or other harmful pathogens.

EPA is aware that on several occasions, emissions of oil droplets from the Limetree Bay Refinery reached a number of residences and possibly other buildings in St. Croix. Questions specific to oil contamination from the refinery incidents, or requests for in-person visits to evaluate potential oil contamination, can be directed to Limetree Bay Refinery.

EPA's toll-free hotline: **(866) 462-4789**.

Contact EPA by email: StCroix@epa.gov

Limetree Bay Refinery: **(340) 692-3495**

communications@lbenergy.com

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

- EPA's [Municipal Handbook on Rainwater Harvesting Policies](#) encourages use of harvested rainwater for a range of environmentally beneficial purposes other than use for drinking or cooking.
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control provides [useful information about cisterns](#) (in both English and Spanish) including testing, cleaning and disinfection. The CDC guidance advises: "*Water contaminated with fuel or toxic chemicals will not be made safe by disinfection. Do not enter the cistern. Gases and vapors can build up, creating a hazardous environment.*"
- The University of Hawaii's [Guidelines on Rainwater Catchment Systems](#) provides information on rainwater collection, storage, treatment and testing, and cistern maintenance. While the document is focused on conditions in Hawaii, it may provide useful information and guidance for USVI residents about use and maintenance of cisterns.
- The National Science Foundation approves technologies for treatment for various contaminants, which can be searched by contaminant at: <https://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/>.

- The University of the Virgin Islands is developing educational materials regarding cistern best management practices for the USVI, expected to be available by the end of 2021.

WATER TESTING

If you wish to have your household cistern water quality tested, EPA recommends using a laboratory certified to analyze regulated drinking water contaminants, including oil-related contaminants. Please note that EPA does not regulate water quality in cisterns and rainwater catchment systems. EPA does regulate water quality in community drinking water supply systems. A list of regulated drinking water contaminants can be found at [EPA National Primary Drinking Water Regulations](#).

The laboratory closest to the USVI that is certified to conduct those analyses is:

Environmental Quality Laboratories (EQLABS)

60 Street E, Minillas Industrial Park
Bayamón, Puerto Rico 00959
(787) 288-6420

Residents can contact EQLABS directly. EQLABS will send a monitoring kit with instructions, including how to send the sample back to the lab. The cost of sampling ranges from approximately \$175 to \$255 or more depending on which parameters are selected.

Additional laboratories certified to analyze chemical contaminants in drinking water can be found [here](#).

In St. Croix, Ocean Systems Laboratory is certified to analyze drinking water for bacteria and can be contacted directly at:

Ocean Systems Laboratory

4049 La Grande Princess, Suite 2
Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820
(340) 718-3246

<https://www.epa.gov/vi/limetree-bay-terminals-and-limetree-bay-refining-llc>
