



News Release

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VI PORT AUTHORITY UPDATES PUBLIC ON STATUS OF YESTERDAY'S TEMPORARY CEKA RUNWAY CLOSURE

The Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas was closed from 1:12 p.m. and re-opened at 3:10 p.m. yesterday after pavement on the runway failed when a jet departed from the airport, said Virgin Islands Port Authority Executive Director Kenn Hobson. To ensure passenger and aircraft safety, the Port Authority issued a temporary closure of the runway until the area that was damaged was repaired.

Hobson said the pavement failure occurred in the first 1,000 feet of the runway where old pavement had been previously milled several weeks ago by project contractor, VI Paving, who is performing the work for VIPA's CEKA Runway Overlay Project which began in March 2010. "The failure is not a result of contractor error," said Hobson. "The problem we are having is that the old pavement on the runway is in such a deteriorated condition that it is failing in portions as we prepare it for overlay. " He added that recent heavy rains are also washing away the old pavement in some areas of the runway that has been milled, and this may have also added to the problem. "We

sincerely apologize to all the passengers and airport employees that were affected by the closure yesterday, and we are doing everything possible to avoid this from happening again as we complete this project," Hobson said.

VIPA did not have an exact number of the number of flights affected by the temporary closure, but Hobson said that the VIPA airport office was compiling that information. He said that all flights arriving to St. Thomas during the closure were diverted to San Juan, but all the delayed flights arrived in St. Thomas shortly after the airport was reopened at 3:10 p.m.

The Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas is one of the Caribbean's busiest airports and has only one runway which measures 7,000 feet long by 150 feet wide. This is the first complete overlay of the runway since its construction in 1991. The airport runway overlay project is being conducted from 10 p.m. through 5:30 a.m. daily. The project is expected to be completed by December 2010, and costs \$15 million -- 95 percent of which is funded by the FAA via an Airport Improvement Project grant. The remaining five percent is funded by the VI Port Authority.

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