



# News Release

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## **No Injuries Reported After Emergency Aircraft Landing at St. Thomas Airport**

The Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas was shut down for a little over two hours this morning after the engine of a departing cargo plane caught afire and made an emergency landing onto the airport runway.

"At approximately 7:47 a.m., Fresh Air (aircraft tail number N8277Q) which had delivered bread to St. Thomas from Puerto Rico was en-route back to the San Juan Airport when the Federal Aviation Administration Tower operators noticed that there was smoke emanating from the plane's engine on the pilot side. However the plane was already in the air when the pilot was notified of the smoke and eventually the engine became engulfed in flames," said Kenn Hobson, the Virgin Islands Port Authority's Executive Director. Hobson said that the plane immediately turned around and made an emergency landing at CEKA but the pilot was unable to stop the plane and it skidded off the runway and stopped after crashing through a portion of the perimeter fencing along the southern side of the airfield (adjacent to Emerald Beach Hotel).

(more)

Hobson said the engine was on fire when it landed and was extinguished by the Port Authority's Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighters. There were only two persons onboard the aircraft, pilot Carlos Garcia and First Officer Eduardo Vasquez and no injuries were reported. Hobson said at this time the Port Authority is not sure what caused the aircraft fire, but that a complete investigation of the incident would be conducted.

The King Airport and airport access road were officially closed at 7:55 a.m. Efforts to remove the plane off the runway began at 9:45 a.m. and the plane was towed off the runway by the VI Department of Public Works (DPW). After a complete sweep of the runway for debris and repair of the damaged fence, the Cyril E. King Airport was officially re-opened at 10:35 a.m. VIPA Airport Manager Jose Nazario confirmed that the only commercial flight that experienced a delay was a 9:05 a.m. departure by American Airlines from St. Thomas to Miami, but that there were other early morning inter-island flights that were also delayed.

In addition to the Port Authority ARFF, law enforcement officers, maintenance staff and management staff, other responding agencies included DPW, Worldwide Flight Services, U.S. Customs, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA), the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Virgin Islands Rescue and the VI Department of Tourism.

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