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Executive Summary Clarifies Results of St. Croix Water Sampling DPNR Urges Corrective Action to Identify Lead and Copper Source

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS -- The USVI Joint Information Center has announced that the Department of Planning and Natural Resources' (DPNR) along with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) conducted sampling of the WAPA water in areas where there was detection of lead and copper.

Following the results of red/brown water testing where elevated levels of lead and copper were detected in 35 out of 66 samples taken, on October 19, 2023, DPNR and WAPA conducted surveillance lead and copper sampling at four (4) locations that are considered sensitive and served a large population. These areas were the John H. Woodson Jr. High School, Alfredo Andrews Elementary School, St. Croix Educational Vocational School/C-tech, and the Mt. Pleasant Housing Complex; in addition, a sample was taken at the Seven Seas water production location in Estate Richmond. A total of 10 samples were collected. The analytical results revealed that the levels of lead and copper detected were below the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) established Action Levels (AL) for lead of 0.015mg/L (15ppb) and for copper 1.3 mg/L (1300 ppb). Of the ten (10) samples collected, six were non-detect for lead. All 10 copper results were below the copper Action Level.

In addition to the October 19th surveillance sampling, on October 21, 2023, DPNR alongside WAPA, conducted sampling of the 37 locations that were initially sampled during the "Red Water" event. DPNR developed a sample plan for the surveillance sampling based on "EPA's 3Ts Program for Lead Sampling Collection". The sampling plan was reviewed and concurred by EPA and WAPA. At each sample point two (2) samples were collected; a first draw sample and a flush sample for a total of seventy-four (74) samples. Thirty-seven first draw samples tested above the EPA's Lead Action Levels, ranging from a low reading of 20 ppb to a high reading of 1400 ppb. After flushing, only one (1) sample point was shown to contain lead above the Action Level. With respect to copper, only five (5) of the thirty-seven (37) first draw samples contained a concentration about the Action Level for copper; after flushing, all samples tested below the Action Level for copper, with over half being undetectable. Considering the above findings, flushing the water before use shows a significant reduction in the concentration of lead and copper in the WAPA water. However, with deep concern for the health and wellbeing of the people of this community, DPNR has mandated WAPA to implement the following corrective/remedial actions:

- Change corrosion control treatment technology from the current polyphosphate product to the zinc orthophosphate product currently being used in the St. Thomas/St. John distribution system.
- WAPA shall immediately collect lead and copper samples at the plant as follows:
 1. Seven Seas product water after post treatment before chlorination.
 2. Water truck standpipe sample station.
 3. A non-first draw sample at the entry-point sample station
- WAPA shall begin the collection of lead and copper samples at the approved total coliform sample stations located throughout the island. These samples should be non-first draw samples to obtain data representative of the water moving through the water mains as opposed to stagnant water in the service lines connected to sample stations.
- WAPA shall collect samples in the areas where water mains, services lines and meters were recently replaced with PVC piping and lead-free fittings that meets EPA's definition of "lead free" following DPNR/WAPA's sampling plan developed for the October 21st sampling event. This sampling will provide crucial data on the levels of lead present in areas with newly installed services lines compared to areas with older service lines containing material not in compliance with the newly established "lead free" requirements.
- As a pilot study, WAPA shall immediately replace the service lines, brass fittings, and brass meters at 7 to 10 locations geographically spaced, that displayed the highest levels of lead, with new material which complies with EPA's lead-free standards. Thereafter, these locations shall be immediately resampled following DPNR/WAPA's sampling plan developed for the October 21st sampling event.
- WAPA shall immediately notify customers in the 37 locations sampled to flush their WAPA water supply for approximately 5 to 10 minutes each day before first use.

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