



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

## USVI JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## WAPA, DPNR and others joined EPA at the Environmental Dialogue in Frederiksted on Tuesday

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS -- The VI Water and Power Authority collaborated with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), the Department of Health (DOH), and VITEMA to address critical lead and copper concerns at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Dialogue held on Tuesday at the Rotary Club West in Frederiksted.

The event brought representatives from several VI Government agencies together to discuss the comprehensive sampling process that was done in collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands, DPNR, and EPA on September 28 and September 29 across the island of St. Croix, including the 16 priority locations that have historically and recently been experiencing reddish-brown water. Also discussed was the importance of resampling and engaging with WAPA customers about their concerns and obtaining feedback.

### Clarification on the Sampling Process:

During the EPA Environmental Dialogue, intricate details of the sampling process were explained. DPNR discussed the difference between lead and copper guidelines established by the EPA, which are conducted on a three-year cycle. It was also noted that historically WAPA sampled every 6 months, then every year and has now gained EPA approval for every three years as compliance with lead and copper requirements has been consistently met.

WAPA's most recent three-year cycle of lead and copper testing, in September 2023, met the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile threshold with only two customers requiring notification of lead presence, per EPA guidelines. Lisa Garcia, Regional Administrator for EPA's Region 2 office, although regrettably noting her virtual presence due to flight delays in Puerto Rico, reiterated WAPA and DPNR's compliance over the years.

### The Significance of Resampling:

One of the key topics was the importance of resampling in addressing the lead and copper crisis. It was emphasized that resampling plays a crucial role in verifying and confirming the initial results. Still, all agencies are actively working behind the scenes developing contingency plans once test results are received. By conducting resampling, the unified command can further assess water quality and validate remediation efforts, ensuring the safety of the community.

For more information, the Department of Health has a hotline for residents with health-related inquiries related to lead and lead testing: 340-712-6299 and 340-776-1519. DPNR's hotline number for information on the sampling process and regulatory practices for ensuring potable water is 340-514-3666.

Testing for lead exposure is also available at the Frederiksted Health Center (FHC) on St. Croix and the St. Thomas East End Medical Center at Tutu Park Mall on St. Thomas.

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