



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

(340) 774-3552 • [communications@viwapa.vi](mailto:communications@viwapa.vi) / [www.viwapa.vi](http://www.viwapa.vi)

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*Phase I Wartsila unit at the Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (Photo by Barry Leerdam)*

## **Despite Challenging Week of Outages, Significant Progress Made with Wartsila Generators**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – In the wake of Tropical Storm Philippe last week, the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or “Authority”) faced multiple challenges related to power outages across the territory. Amidst isolated outages due to Tropical Storm Philippe, and an island-wide outage impacting St. Thomas on Thursday the week also offered progress on several key fronts.

A major development was the Authority’s successful real-world test of its new Phase II Wartsila generators and its Phase I Wartsila generators that were placed in service in 2018. This critical test took place following a plant-wide blackout at the Randolph Harley Power Plant (RHPP) on St. Thomas early Thursday morning. Phase II of the Wartsila generators will be in service in 7-14 days, but the Authority took the opportunity to put them to a real-world test. The Wartsila generators demonstrated their ability to “black start”, an important capability that allows the generation unit to restore electrical power from a cold or de-energized state. This function is particularly important for island communities that are geographically isolated from the mainland and do not have access to an external source of electricity.

As WAPA restored service on Thursday, the flexibility of the Wartsila generators was also demonstrated. Customers may have noticed intermittent power restoration and disruption on several feeders for one to

two hours on Thursday. This occurred as WAPA personnel became familiar with operating the new Wartsila generators during a period of instability on the system. As customers saw, as the WAPA team refined the operation of the new generators, power was fully restored. The Wartsila generators carried the majority of the island's load until into the evening when they were taken out of service to complete remaining final commissioning steps.

"While understandably frustrating for our customers, the silver lining of the last week is actually quite monumental for the St. Thomas - St. John district, as significant progress was made towards establishing generation redundancy for customers," noted Andrew Smith, Executive Director and Chief Information Officer of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority. "The lessons learned during this first "black start" of the new Wartsilas will significantly reduce the turnaround time of future restoration efforts," added CEO Smith.

While the path to progress is not always straight and challenges posed by tropical storms and power disruptions are complex, the Authority remains dedicated to improving its infrastructure and continuing to seek funding sources to invest in a more resilient and reliable power supply for the Virgin Islands.

On behalf of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Board, Chairman Kyle Fleming would like to first thank the community for their patience with the Authority during these last few difficult days as the men and women of the WAPA worked diligently and safely to address the legacy issues that caused the most recent electrical outages:

"The board understands the frustrations of our customers and recognizes the many inconveniences that these most recent outages have brought to them. It is not acceptable," stated Chairman Fleming. "However, amidst this most recent outage event, we are encouraged that some of the strategic initiatives of the Authority have started to bear fruit. The addition of the Wartsila Generation enabled the Authority to better manage and recover from the outages."

The Authority appreciates the patience and understanding of its customers and assures the public that continued efforts are being made to mitigate the impact of future outages.

*The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Communication's department is committed to reaching, informing, and connecting with the youngest members of the community to the eldest, through meaningful, transparent and effective communication.*

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**About WAPA:** The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority is an autonomous agency of the Virgin Islands Government which produces and distributes electricity and drinking water to residential and commercial customers in the territory. WAPA was created by the Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1964 through Act No. 1248. Today, WAPA generates electrical power at production plants on St. Thomas and St. Croix and distributes electrical service through smart grids to customers on St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John, Hassel Island, and Water Island. Potable water is distributed to almost 13,000 customers through water lines and standpipes. WAPA also has the responsibility of installing and maintaining streetlights.

(340) 774-3552 (STT/STJ) • (340) 773-2250 (STX) |  Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority |  @VIWAPA