



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

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**Authority Collaborates for Water Quality Enhancements with Additional Technical Assistance**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or “Authority”) maintains its commitment to transparency and to ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. We are dedicated to providing high quality drinking water to our residents and want to keep the community informed. Initial review of the EPA test results occurred yesterday with key partners, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) and the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI).

In our recent extended sampling on the island of St. Croix, on the initial sample results, EPA discovered elevated levels of lead and copper in 35 out of the 66 samples collected. We want to reassure the public that our team is acting promptly to address this situation.

As part of the approved sampling process, after flushing the water lines for 3-5 minutes, little to no levels of lead or copper were detected in the vast majority. This indicates that the issue in those localized areas may be related to stagnant water, further investigation is underway prior to any conclusions.

In our commitment to the highest standards, EPA has committed to providing technical assistance to conduct a comprehensive resampling effort. While WAPA is immediately taking action with secondary samples and additional flushing across the distribution system with a concentration in the areas with elevated levels. EPA and our dedicated local and federal partners are actively collaborating to investigate the source of the elevated levels of lead and copper with urgency.

While most of the community does not consume the water, the four areas that had elevated levels following the flushing were Diamond, Castle Burke Community, Colquohoun and Mon Bijou. Here are the recommendations based on the levels found for all customers on the water distribution system on the island of St. Croix:

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** The longer water sits in your home piping; the more lead may leach from lead-containing fixtures.
- **Do not cook with or drink water from the tap. Boiling water DOES NOT remove lead** from water.
- **Identify and replace plumbing fixtures that contain lead.** Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free,” may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows pipes, fittings, and fixtures with up to 0.25 percent weighted average of lead to be identified as “lead-free. Plumbing materials that are lead free can also be identified by

looking for lead free certification marks(<http://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=P100LVYK.txt>).

- **Consider using a filter certified for lead removal after flushing your water.** Read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead. Verify the claims of manufacturers by checking with independent certifying organizations that provide lists of treatment devices that they have certified.
- **Regularly clean faucet aerators.** Aerators, the screens at the end of faucets, can collect debris. Rinse out collected materials to reduce debris accumulation.
- **Use an alternative source.** Until the concentration of lead in drinking water is mitigated, you should use a different source of drinking water (i.e. bottled water).
- **Periodically re-test your water for lead.** Contact local labs such as Ocean Systems Laboratory at (340) 718-3246 located at 4049 La Grande Princesse, Christiansted, VI 00820 to do water testing.

In addition to near-term efforts being identified to address the corrosion and metal contamination, the Prudent Replacement program to overhaul of the entire water distribution on St. Croix along the active and completed water rehabilitation projects, including Clifton Hill, Campo Rico, and Hannah's Rest continues to progress.

The Authority appreciates the community's understanding and cooperation as we work diligently to address the discolored water in our aging system.

*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.

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