



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

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Image: WAPA Plant Personnel in front of GT20 at the Richmond Power Plant on St. Croix.

Navigating Challenges: WAPA Faced Islandwide Outages Amidst Adverse Weather and Aging Infrastructure

U.S. Virgin Islands– The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or “Authority”) is issuing this press release to address the recent series of outages experienced on the St. Thomas-St. John and St. Croix districts.

Last week and throughout the weekend, residents and businesses on both islands encountered disruptions in their electricity supply. On St. Croix, this included an island-wide outage that lasted several hours while throughout the St. Thomas-St. John district, including Water Island, several feeders experienced electrical service interruptions.

Challenges and Reasoning for Outages:

On St. Croix, the island-wide outage on Friday, May 3, 2024, at approximately 4:40pm was initially caused by extreme weather conditions which resulted in a loss of generation. After further investigating, WAPA Plant personnel identified that a fault was detected on the transformer which initiated the protection scheme, which is designed to protect WAPA’s assets from damage. WAPA personnel are gathering data for the root cause analysis to make a final determination on the cause of the outage and necessary steps to prevent future outages.

On Sunday, May 5, 2024, at approximately 1:00am there was a major electrical interruption caused by the activation of the Emergency Shutdown (ESD) Protocol at the LPG terminal facility, a safety mechanism to protect the Richmond power plant. The Authority is working with its partners to establish the cause of the ESD protocol activation and corrective actions.

Later Sunday morning on St. Croix at approximately 7:11am, several feeders experienced a 12-minute outage due to the loss of generation from GT20. After conducting thorough diagnostics, WAPA Personnel identified that GT20 tripped due to poor power supply in the turbine control system.

In the St. Thomas-St. John district, during heavy rains Unit 23 tripped, leading to further electrical interruptions. Though it is commonly known that torrential weather can impact the safety of our linemen, similarly flooding and other wet/high wind conditions can create an extremely hazardous work environment for employees at the power plant. Despite the delays caused by the weather, diagnostic assessments were conducted to identify and address the underlying issues that caused the loss of generation.

The existing electrical infrastructure across the Territory has faced challenges as a result of aging components and deferred maintenance due to financial constraints. This has contributed to the frequency of equipment failures and service interruptions.

As part of WAPA's overall efforts in overcoming these challenges, WAPA has been implementing the following measures:

Emergency Repairs/Continued Maintenance: Immediate repairs and replacements of damaged infrastructure to increase the integrity of the grid and reduce frequency and impact of electric outages.

Infrastructure Upgrades: Plans for upgrading and modernizing the electrical grid are in place to improve reliability and resilience against future disruptions, including acquisition of VITOL, completion of the Wartsila project on St. Thomas, and increased efficient generation units on St. Croix.

Accelerating Renewable Energy Resources: By diversifying our energy portfolio with renewables such as solar and wind power, the Authority aims to enhance the reliability and resilience of the grid, ensuring a sustainable and secure energy future. Several major solar projects are slated to be completed this year and wind power projects in the pipeline for 2025. It is expected that over 50% of sourced energy in three (3) years will be renewable energy throughout the Territory.

The Authority understands the importance of a reliable electric grid for the well-being and prosperity of our communities and apologizes for any inconvenience caused by these recent outages.

For further information and updates on plans towards sustainability, please visit <https://www.viwapa.vi/strategicplan/>.

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