



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
NEWS RELEASE

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**WAPA AWARDED FEDERAL FUNDS TO CONTINUE INSTALLATION OF
COMPOSITE POLES AND UNDERGROUNDING OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT ON
ST. JOHN**

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has been awarded more than \$113 million for the continued installation of composite utility poles on St. John and the undergrounding of electrical equipment in St. John.

The funding, approved on Friday, is the latest obligation of FEMA monies to WAPA to execute a myriad of mitigation projects that are aimed at building a more reliable, efficient, and resilient electrical system in the territory.

"Today's approval of \$113,409,904.55 by FEMA follows on WAPA's continued justification of projects to modernize and rehabilitate not only the power plants but the electric grids comprised of both transmission and distribution components. We are grateful to our partners at FEMA and HUD, the leadership of Governor Albert Bryan Jr and the Office of Disaster Recovery for the continued support they have provided to WAPA in securing funding for the three to five year transformation of the utility," said Executive Director / CEO Lawrence J. Kupfer.

"This award marks another critical milestone in our recovery and our efforts to support WAPA's ongoing transformation and plans to bring energy independence to St. Johnians," Governor Bryan said.

"FEMA's commitment to the recovery of St. John and all of the U.S. Virgin Islands remains steadfast. Today's announcement is the next step in our partnership with Governor Bryan, WAPA, and ODR to rebuild the electrical infrastructure on this beautiful island. We look forward to continued collaboration with our federal and territorial partners in moving the island's recovery forward," said FEMA U.S. Virgin Islands Acting Recovery Director John Covell.

Kupfer said the funding announced today by FEMA is specific to projects on St. John. "We will continue to install composite poles in the areas where it is impossible to underground while undergrounding significant portions of our electrical equipment."

In a few weeks, ground will be broken on St. John for the first phase of the undergrounding of Feeder 7E, beginning at the existing substation and continuing towards downtown Cruz Bay. "Plans for the project have been approved, permits are in place, and a notice to proceed was issued recently to the contractor," Kupfer said.

To date, 966 composite poles have been installed on St. John representing about 49% of the pole project on the island. Plans call for the installation of 1,960 composite poles on St. John.

Key components of the Authority's transformation plan include poles that can better withstand windstorms, undergrounding of electrical equipment, addition of more solar and wind renewables to the grid, addition of new generation at power plants on St. Thomas and St. Croix, and the development of micro electric grids with battery systems. In addition, St. John is also slated to receive two standby power generators that will restore service to customers on the island when generation challenges affect the St. Thomas power plant. The standby generators are now in the design stages.

In the aftermath of the 2017 hurricanes, more than 90% of the electric system on St. John was destroyed. Electrical service was restored to the island some 51 days after Hurricane Irma's landfall.

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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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