



# the Current Connection

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## COMPOSITE POLE INSTALLATIONS

WAPA contractors, Haugland Energy and BBC Electric Services, continue the installation of composite poles in both districts. The poles are being installed at a steady pace followed by line transfers. Installations are taking place in locations where undergrounding of electrical equipment is not feasible due to terrain challenges. The pole project aims at hardening the remaining overhead electrical system.



*WAPA and BBC Electric crews work on composite pole assembly.*

The composite poles are being installed in phases - first the new composite pole is planted, line accessories are installed, then the existing lines are transferred from the wood pole to the new composite pole. As of June 30, there has been steady progress on all three islands - on St. Croix, 1,701 poles have been planted and 1,591 poles fully transferred and completed. On St. John, a total of 1,030 poles have been planted with 697 fully completed. St. Thomas has seen 994 poles planted and of that total, 817 are fully completed.

The composite pole project is approximately 42% complete on St. Croix, 53% on St. John and 43% on St. Thomas. The St. Croix project has a target completion date of March 2022 while St. Thomas and St. John is scheduled for completion in January 2024. The Water Island composite pole project was completed in 2020 with 200 poles fully installed.

## MITIGATION PROJECTS

A significant part of WAPA's overall Strategic Transformation Plan is the undergrounding of crucial electrical equipment in both districts. Critical equipment such as the primary electrical backbone comprised of the main transmission & distribution circuits, which serve key facilities and densely populated areas, will no longer be subject to windstorms and the damage they create.

In April, WAPA broke ground for three underground projects on St. Croix: Golden Grove, Midland and the Container Port. Efforts continue on all three projects and on a similar underground initiative on St. John to secure necessary permits, rights of way, approval of work in the coastal zone, access to conduits, the contracting of an archeologist and final local and federal approvals. Engineering and design work is underway for the undergrounding projects on St. Thomas.



*St Croix Undergrounding Projects  
Groundbreaking Ceremony - April 14, 2021*

# NET ENERGY BILLING PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS STREAMLINED



WAPA, in concert with the V.I. Energy Office and DPNR, have tackled challenges that previously stalled Net Energy Billing Program applications through the permitting process. The process has been streamlined to now require a certifying letter and installation checklist from the licensed electrician associated with the project. In a joint statement, the three agencies noted that the goal of accepting the certifying letter and installation checklist is to expedite the approval process and ensure that applications will move through the process more efficiently. There is a requirement that the checklist be signed and stamped by the electrician associated with the project and that the documents be either uploaded to the Net Energy billing portal or submitted to the Energy Office. The checklist template is available at the Energy Office or on the agency's website, [www.energy.vi.gov](http://www.energy.vi.gov).

Additionally, participation is required from all non-registered grid interconnected solar and solar plus storage installations throughout the territory. Strict enforcement protocols will be implemented for intentional non-compliance. All owners of solar installations are reminded that the Net Energy Billing Program is not a voluntary program. All currently installed, non-net meter, and future grid-connected distributed energy installations must be registered within the program.

Officials of the three agencies have noted that to date, community engagement with the Net Energy Billing Program is promising as applications are being regularly submitted and moved through the various stages of the approval process.

The three agencies have pledged their support to ensure that the process is both streamlined and efficient for all who have already submitted applications and for those who intend to participate in the program in the future.

Further information on the Net Billing Energy Program is available on the WAPA website, [www.viwapa.vi](http://www.viwapa.vi).

## ST. CROIX MICROGRID



Coordination continues between the federal and local governments to energize a legacy for renewable energy in the Virgin Islands. On St. Croix, WAPA has been awarded \$4.5 million for the engineering and design of the first phase of a microgrid project on the western end of the island.

The microgrid project will include construction of a solar plant and battery energy storage system to provide a renewable source of power for St. Croix while increasing reliability of the electric grid and providing the western part of the island electrical service during extreme weather. The total proposed cost for the project is \$129.7 million.



## HUSTON HARRIGAN RETIRES...



After almost 35 years of service to WAPA, Substation Manager Huston Harrigan, Jr. retired at the end of May. We thank him for his years of service and wish him Godspeed in his golden years. Electrical Engineer Chavante Marsh is now serving as Acting Substations Manager.

# HURRICANE SEASON

## WHEN SEVERE WEATHER STRIKES



Before, during and after storm events, WAPA's goal is to keep you informed about our response, recovery and restoration of service.



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WAPA...Working For You!

Long before the commencement of the 2021 Atlantic Hurricane Season on June 1, planning got underway at the Authority for the busy season that has been predicted. Preparations have included the implementation of an Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS is used to guide the recovery from major disaster events. ICS Management staff were selected, Emergency Operations Plans have been updated and regular meetings are taking place to discuss supply chain and supplementary disaster recovery crew needs.

A refresher discussion was held in May with officials of the American Public Power Association (APPA), and, in June, ICS management participated in a week-long tabletop exercise coordinated by FEMA and VITEMA.

Now is a good time to add signing up for WAPA Alerts to your family's hurricane response plan. WAPA Alerts is a free messaging system designed to provide information on everything WAPA. Visit us online at [www.viwapa.vi](http://www.viwapa.vi) and stay connected!



Don Gregoire, interim incident commander and interim chief operating officer of the water system, and Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel attend a 2021 Atlantic hurricane season preparedness briefing for Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. at the University of the Virgin Islands.



# WATER REHABILITATION FREDERIKSTED

The Frederiksted Waterline Rehabilitation Project on St. Croix is nearing its final stages. Waterlines along all streets incorporated in initial plans of the project are now pressurized and providing customers with consistent water supply through the new PVC lines. In May and June, employees of Leumas Engineering, WAPA's contractor for the water project, installed six-inch valves along Queen Cross Street and at other locations in Frederiksted Town.



# ELECTRICAL IMPROVEMENTS MAFOLIE HILL & SUBBASE

A Line Department crew worked to restore full service to a customer on Mafolie Hill. The customer was experiencing partial power at his residence.



Line Department crews install a new double-circuit pole near the Nisky Shopping Center on St. Thomas following a pole fire which compromised electrical equipment on Feeders 7A and 8A. The fire resulted in both feeders tripping and a subsequent districtwide electrical service interruption.

