



The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority
Corporate Communications
PRESS RELEASE



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**WAPA CONTINUES CHRISTIANSTED UNDERGROUND PROJECT
(UPDATE)**

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority is continuing Phase I of the Christiansted Underground Project. Construction crews from GEC will be excavating and then installing conduits and manholes east from the Richmond Substation to West Street continuing to Strand Street, then on to the Prince Street intersection.

Crews are currently working at the intersection of Prince Street and Strand Street. This work is expected to continue to the end of February. Residents, business owners and government agency employees in the area are asked to proceed with caution and to observe all traffic directions. Every effort will be made to minimize any noise that may occur during the work period from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

WAPA appreciates the cooperation of the public during this service improvement effort.

Background Information

According to Hugo V. Hodge, Jr., WAPA's Executive Director, the goal of the underground project is to mitigate the destruction and lengthy restoration process of Christiansted's electrical distribution system in the event of a hurricane or major wind storm. The project is federally funded by several grants which require a 75/25 percent cost share between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and WAPA. Locally, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) was instrumental in assisting WAPA in securing the federal grants.

The installation of underground ducts and electrical cables will be completed in three phases. Phase I on Strand and Prince Streets, will cost \$3.74 million and be completed next year. Phase II will include underground line installation on Strand, King, and Company Streets at a cost of \$3.67 million and is expected to be completed in 2011. WAPA will apply to FEMA for additional funds to complete Phase III which will include Queen, Hill, East and Fisher Streets in Christiansted town. The underground systems will have provisions for both electrical and communications cabling.

WAPA's cost share funds will come from monies which have been generated from customer payments into the Self-Insurance and Hazard Mitigation Fund. The customer surcharge which was approved by the Public Services Commission (PSC) in 1994 was established to help mitigate the potential impact of natural disasters on the electrical system and to initiate immediate restoration of the system should there be a delay or absence of federal funds during disaster restoration. The surcharge was eliminated in February 2006 when the fund reached its approved limit of \$8 million.

St. Croix has underground distribution facilities from the Richmond plant to the Juan F. Luis Hospital and to the Henry Rohlsen Airport. A section of St. Croix's Feeder #8 serving the west end is also underground. On St. Thomas, there are underground distribution facilities from the Randolph Harley Power Plant to the Cyril E. King Airport and to the Roy L. Schneider Hospital.

The Authority appreciates the public's cooperation during this major capital improvement project to better serve the people of the Virgin Islands.

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