



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

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Phase I of the Composite Pole Installation 98% Complete and St. Croix Scheduled Outages



Image: WAPA Line crew and contractor, Haugland VI, working on composite pole installations.

U.S. Virgin Islands - (July 9, 2024) – The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or the “Authority”) are pleased to provide an update on the ongoing installation of composite poles across the territory, as well as the reasons behind the recent scheduled outages on St. Croix. The implementation of composite poles marks a significant advancement in the resilience and longevity of our transmission and distribution (“T&D”) infrastructure. Unlike traditional wooden poles, composite poles are designed to withstand harsh environmental conditions, reducing the frequency and severity of outages. This improvement is particularly crucial in our territory, where natural disasters can cause extensive damage to the electrical infrastructure.

To date, 8,494 composite poles have been installed territory-wide by our dedicated contractors, Haugland VI on St. Thomas, Water Island, and St. Croix; and BBC assigned to St. John ensuring the successful completion of the composite pole installation project. [As previously released](#), the Water Island composite pole project was completed last year on schedule. The Authority is in the process of securing grant funding from FEMA to replace 2,200 additional poles territory-wide, recently approved by the [WAPA Governing Board](#). Phase II have targeted end dates in 2026 to incorporate additional composite poles in strategic areas, rather than opting for underground installations.

The installation of composite poles brings numerous benefits, including enhanced resilience of the T&D infrastructure, reduced vulnerability to natural disasters, and more efficient installation processes. Further, the life span of composite poles generally ranges from 60 to 80 years, whereas wooden poles typically have a life span of about 30 to 40 years. Composite poles are also more durable and resistant to environmental factors, such as rot, insect damage, and weathering, which contributes to their longer life span compared to wooden poles.

Additionally, this initiative will decrease outage duration and reduce recovery time, effort, and resource expenditure following incidents. As of July 2024, WAPA has made significant progress: on St. Croix, 3,940 poles have been set and 3,838 wires transferred; on St. Thomas, 2,656 poles have been set and 2,589 wires transferred; and on St. John, 1,711 poles have been set and 1,442 wires transferred. Amendments for additional poles on St. John within the National Park are in progress, pending the National Park Service's environment assessment. Overall, phase I of the project is 98 percent complete territory-wide, with St. Croix at 96 percent, St. Thomas at 100 percent and St. John at 87 percent.

The recent scheduled outages on St. Croix are a necessary step to ensure the seamless integration of the new composite poles into the existing infrastructure. These outages allow our teams to safely and efficiently transfer wires and complete other essential tasks. While undergrounding electrical infrastructure can offer protection against environmental factors, it is often cost-prohibitive and challenging in certain terrains. Composite poles provide an equally resilient alternative, ensuring our infrastructure can withstand natural disasters and continue to serve our community effectively.

The Authority appreciates the patience and understanding of our customers as we work towards a more robust and reliable electrical grid. To learn more and stay updated, please visit www.viwapa.vi.

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.