



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

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*Figure 1: WAPA's Water Distribution Department working to replace outdated piping infrastructure.*

## **Authority Takes Action to Combat Brown Water on the Island of St. Croix**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or “Authority”) would like to provide the community with an update on the current discolored water in localized areas of St. Croix and actions being taken to ensure water safety and quality.

“We understand the frustrations some customers are experiencing as it relates to occurrences of brown water,” noted Executive Director/CEO Andrew Smith of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority. “Brown water is unacceptable to me and WAPA, and our team has been taking numerous steps to improve the quality of water in localized areas while working closely with EPA and DPNR on additional mitigation solutions.”

As highlighted in the Authority’s recent press release issued on [August 11](#), WAPA has been working diligently to address water quality concerns. The Authority’s water discoloration stems from a complex array of compounding issues including aging iron pipes that are over 60 years old, sargassum influx, and lower water levels and pressure due to drought conditions throughout the region. Further complicating matters, unexpected large leaks and an increase in potable water demand from customers who typically use cisterns due to the drought have also caused water tank storage reserves to drop to critical levels. Low water inventory results in low water pressure which then causes lower water flow throughout WAPA’s water system. Low water flow causes an increase in brown water.

As part of ongoing mitigation efforts, WAPA has been utilizing a technique called “Flushing” which increases water flow through the system. This increase in flow stirs up any minerals and deposits in the pipes and clears them out, improving water clarity. Flushing can occur at the hydrant, the customer meter and/or at a sample point. Due to drought conditions, frequency of flushing is balanced with ensuring water

storage tank levels remain sufficient. As described, low water pressure results in lower water flow in WAPA's system and an increase in brown water. Aggressive flushing further lowers water pressure, which can make the water discoloration worse. WAPA is carefully balancing system flushing with management of inventory levels. WAPA expects to be able to increase the frequency of system flushing as water inventory continues to increase in St. Croix with the recent rainfall because WAPA is seeing lower demand for water from customers on cisterns. Additionally, WAPA regularly treats its potable water to reduce corrosion in the iron ductile pipe as part of its maintenance program and to ensure that the water meets EPA mandated standard.

In addition, as some customers are switching from their cisterns to potable water, they may initially experience discolored water due the water in their pipes having had little to no flow for an extended period of time because the customer was previously using their cistern.

The Authority continues its commitment of providing water that meets EPA's primary standards and to reassure the community, additional sampling is being conducted across the island of St. Croix. For customers experiencing discoloration, please call 340-774-3552 or visit <https://www.viwapa.vi/customer.../report-outage-or-problem>.

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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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