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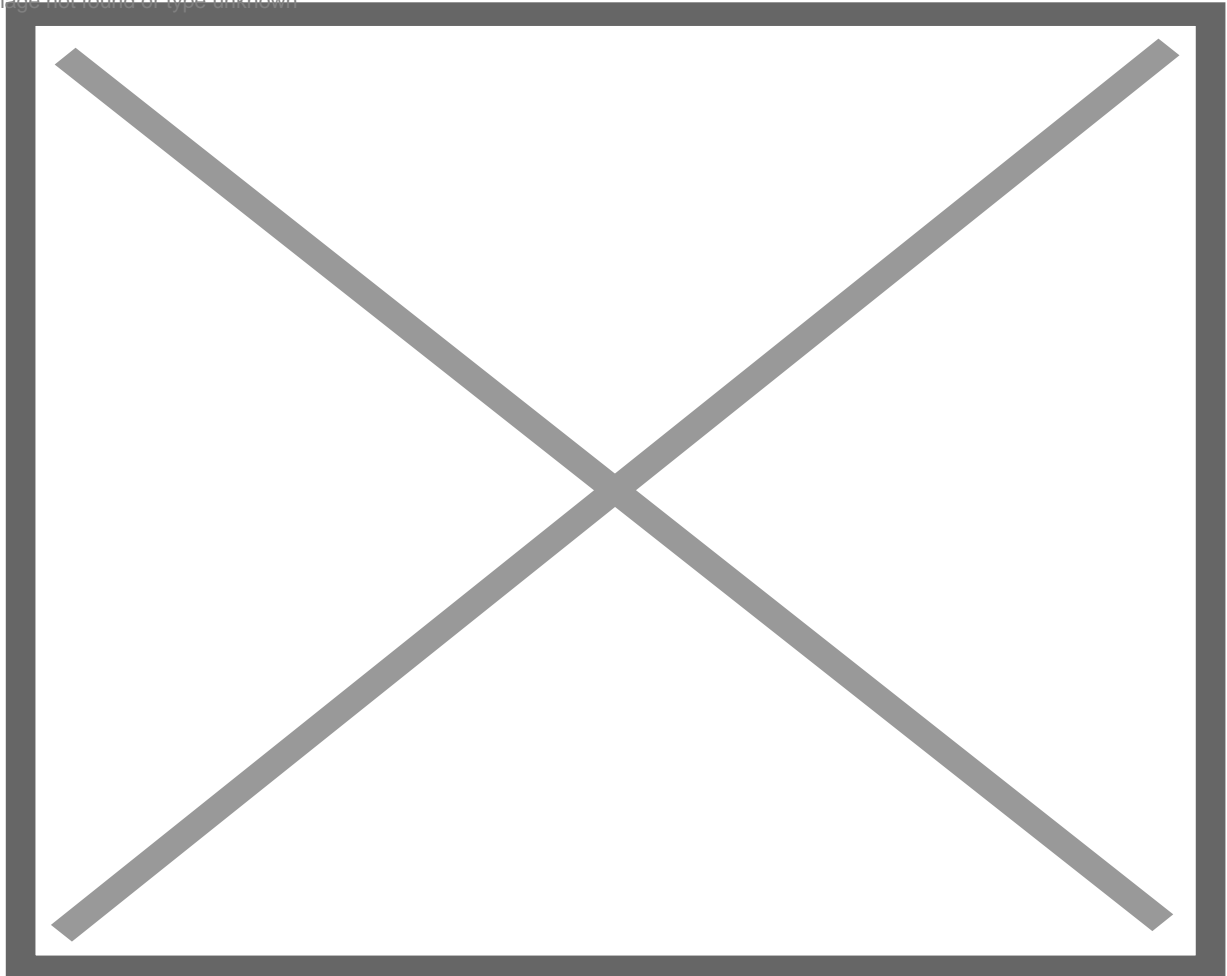
WAPA Chief Slams Class Action Suit for Exposing Utility to Significant Liability

Authority details response efforts and clean water initiatives

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A storage tank at WAPA's power plant in Richmond, Christiansted, St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Andrew Smith, CEO of the V.I. Water & Power Authority, has expressed disappointment in response to a [class action lawsuit](#) filed over [alleged heavy metal contamination](#) in St. Croix's water distribution system.

In a statement, Mr. Smith said the authority is committed to resolving the water issue while criticizing the lawsuit as a cash grab. "We, at the Authority, are disappointed that amidst these challenging circumstances, there are those who seek monetary gain by exploiting the evolving

situation impacting the people of St. Croix.”

The lawsuit, led by Xiomara Torres and several other residents, claims widespread lead and copper contamination in the drinking water, posing a significant health risk. Filed by the law office of Lee Rohn and Associates, the lawsuit alleges negligence and gross negligence on the part of WAPA and Seven Seas Water Solutions USA LLC.

Chronologically, the events leading to the lawsuit began on October 14, 2023, when WAPA notified customers of contaminated water. The V.I. Dept. of Health and Governor Albert Bryan Jr. advised against consuming the water, affecting thousands of residents.

Mr. Smith defended WAPA’s response, detailing their proactive measures, including immediate actions to address concerns, open communication, and launching the Clean Water Action initiative. “Our actions demonstrate our dedication to ensuring the safety of our customers,” he stated.

The lawsuit outlines WAPA's failures in maintaining a safe drinking water system, including issues like discolored, odorous water and frequent leaks. The plaintiffs seek injunctive and monetary relief for economic harm, property damage, personal injuries, and a medical monitoring program.

However, recent developments have cast doubt on the initial findings. Virginia Tech water expert Marc Edwards [expressed skepticism](#) about the high toxicity levels, citing improper sample collection methods. Governor Bryan [announced](#) that new EPA tests showed lead and copper levels were significantly below actionable levels, with many areas showing non-detectable traces, contradicting the initial elevated readings.

Attorney Lee Rohn acknowledged that the litigation is in its early stages, expressing hope for a resolution benefiting St. Croix residents. “We are hopeful that the companies involved accept responsibility for their actions,” the law firm said, emphasizing the goal of providing potable water at the expense of the companies, not the ratepayers and taxpayers.