

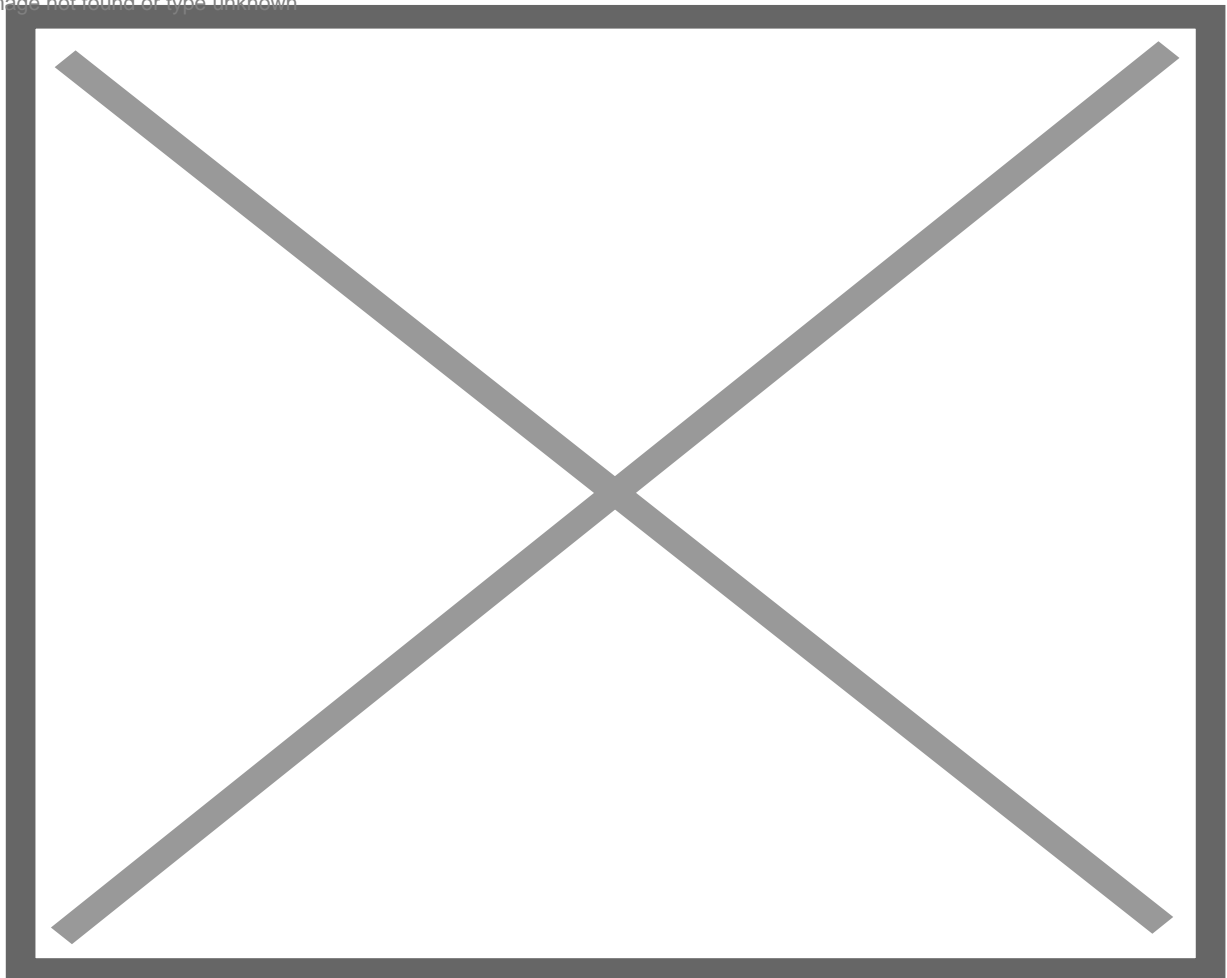
EPA's Latest Test Finds 3 of 119 Samples With Elevated Lead in St. Croix, Stresses Need to Fix Water Discoloration

Upcoming community meeting to discuss water safety measures

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On Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency issued an update to provide the latest results from water sampling done at 11 homes on St. Croix, revealing that of the 119 samples collected for the sequential sampling study at the 11 homes, "three samples showed levels above the EPA's 15 parts per billion (ppb) Lead Action Level."

The results, the EPA says, indicates that the lead contamination is likely being caused by the faucet or aerator in the homes, as well as lead in plumbing components around the distribution meter.

EPA Regional Administrator Lisa Garcia commended local officials from the Water and Power Authority as well as central government “for taking immediate action to advise people not to consume the water, to collect more samples, begin replacing components in the system and develop a voucher program.”

Despite [later test results](#) showing that the extent of the contamination may be significantly less than what was [initially believed](#), the government and the EPA nevertheless “had a responsibility to take decisive action and investigate the situation further,” Ms. Garcia said.

The continued presence of lead in a few of the samples “confirms the need to ensure that proper steps are being taken by the water provider and by consumers to protect people and reduce the potential exposure to lead,” Ms. Garcia continued.

Local regulatory agencies and WAPA must “develop and implement a comprehensive plan to educate the public about steps they can take to reduce their exposure to lead in drinking water,” the EPA said, before residents can begin to consume water from WAPA’s potable water distribution system.

The EPA also said that the longstanding water discoloration issue which prompted the initial investigation and round of testing that discovered the heavy metal contamination, is “still serious and need[s] attention.” Some of the measures being implemented for lead abatement, the EPA believes, may also help mitigate the discoloration problem. The federal agency says it will continue to work with the USVI to address this issue.

An upcoming community meeting will be held on December 13 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at the premises of the Rotary Club of St. Croix West. The public will also be able to participate [virtually](#).