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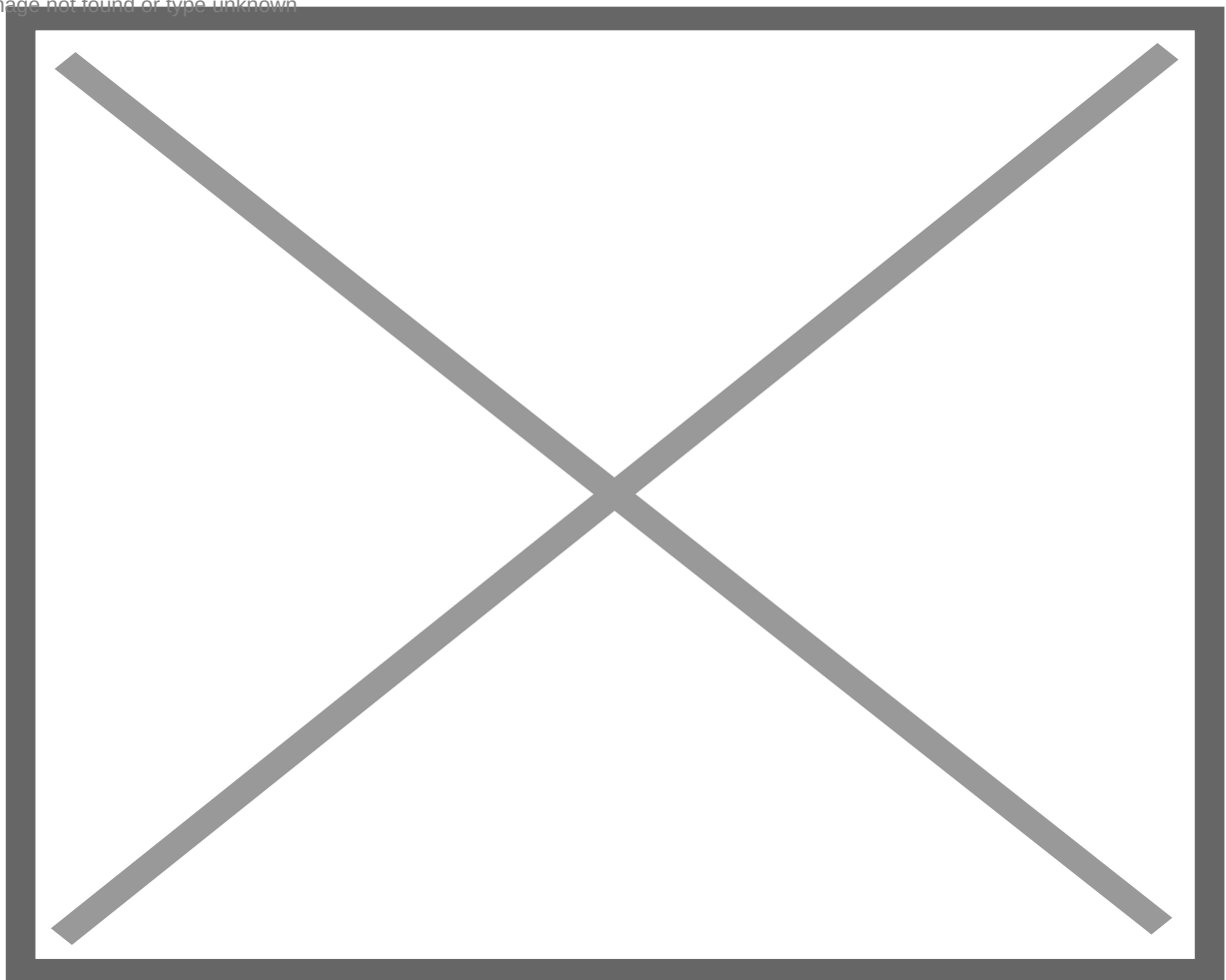
St. Croix's Drinking Ban Could Be Lifted Soon, Says Government, Despite Persistent Brown Water Challenges

Final round of testing to confirm water safety before lifting no drink advisory on st. Croix

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The Environmental Protection Agency attributes earlier reports of high copper and lead levels in parts of St. Croix's water distribution system to a "flaw in the September sample collection process." This explanation was conveyed by Government House Communications Director Richard Motta on Monday, who said that the new findings are a result of subsequent sequential tests.

Mr. Motta shared details from the [recently published news release](#), including the discovery of non-compliant heavy metal levels in only three of one hundred and nineteen samples tested. Of those three, two samples were identified as “being caused by the internal plumbing of the home,” while the third sample was from water that had sat stagnant for some time before being sampled. “None of the positive results were attributed directly to WAPA’s water distribution system,” reaffirmed Mr. Motta.

For further confirmation and peace of mind, the administration said it will “embark on a final round of surveillance testing.” Mr. Motta told members of the media that if these pending results support the most recent EPA findings, “we will lift the no drink advisory.”

The territory is currently under a local state of emergency expected to end on December 29th. “The data that we are receiving and the strategic efforts in place potentially put us on a path to end the state of emergency later this month,” he noted.

In the interim, the GVI intends to implement a “comprehensive plan to educate the public about steps they can take to reduce their exposure to lead in their homes and drinking water.” WAPA, Mr. Motta revealed, has employed the services of a public relations firm to assist in that regard. Out of an abundance of caution, the Department of Health will continue lead testing for children six and under. The GVI will also support WAPA as the authority works to “optimize their corrosion control technology on St. Croix.”

According to Mr. Motta, these efforts will not only alleviate concerns related to lead and copper but also “address the problems regarding the rust-tainted water that has plagued large parts of our community for several years.”

Speaking on behalf of the territory’s leader, Mr. Motta shared that Governor Bryan is “grateful that the findings of high lead and copper have not been realized and is also grateful for the work of his incident response team and our federal partners.” The local handling of the water crisis, said Mr. Motta, demonstrates a “capability to safeguard and protect our people in times of crisis and disaster.”

Even so, the EPA has 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.