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\$750,000 Grant Funds State-of-the-Art Lineman Training for V.I. Water and Power Authority

Chief Operating Officer Ashley Bryan unveils a comprehensive lineman training funded by the Department of Interior to upgrade WAPA's safety practices

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Students undergo training on electrical poles at Kuna's Northwest Lineman College. By. NORTHWEST LINEMAN COLLEGE

The V.I. Water and Power Authority is launching a new lineman training program to upgrade skills and safety practices.

During Thursday's meeting of WAPA's Governing Board, Chief Operating Officer Ashley Bryan provided details on the program, conducted by Northwest Lineman College and funded by a

\$750,000 Department of Interior grant. NLC is known for its "extremely rigorous" curriculum, Ms. Bryan told board members.

"The level of intensity for the training that is provided by Northwest Lineman College supersedes any training that we have ever been through," Ms. Bryan stated. The program will include hot line school, where trainees must achieve "100% perfection" on energized line procedures.

She explained that the new training is needed because WAPA's current three-year apprenticeship program results in employees needing five years before they are able to undertake "energized work," according to Ms. Bryan. "That's a little long for how the industry does it." She believes that aligning job specifications with the new training program will result in workers being able to perform new job roles as they acquire the skills through their training progression.

Ms. Bryan said this will "elevate us to the next level" compared to past training, while Director of Safety Josh Jones emphasized that changing a "high risk tolerance" culture is important. He said the training will help break unsafe "pattern chains" that can lead to injuries.

Executive Director Andrew Smith noted that the training comes just after the utility grappled with an injury incident in January. The program aims to enhance linemen's ability to identify and report potential hazards, reducing the probability of future injuries among WAPA's cohort of linemen.

Ms. Bryan also noted that the training will modernize line work as WAPA begins to incorporate renewables and underground infrastructure into the territory's grid.