

logo not found or type unknown

## Carrion Calls on Bryan to Seek Assistance From Army Corps of Engineers as Rolling Blackouts Plague STT-STJ District

Amid persistent power supply issues, Senator Carrion urges Governor Bryan to leverage emergency powers to bring in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

WAPA / **Published On June 06, 2024 06:16 AM /**

Janeka Simon **June 06, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



The Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas, USVI. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Amidst the [flurry of news](#) suggesting that prospects for the territory's beleaguered power company may be about to improve, residents of the territory, particularly on St. John and St. Thomas, continue to grapple with an unstable supply of electricity.

Damage to the sole undersea cable connecting St. John to the power generation system on St. Thomas has left the district crippled. Residents must contend with rolling blackouts, receiving electricity during 2-hour increments, as feeders have been placed on a “rotational schedule” by WAPA.?

During a press conference on Wednesday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. noted that some residents on St. John have resorted to visiting the Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center to keep their devices charged, in order to ensure they remain connected to the outside world.?

This state of affairs has led Senator Samuel Carrion to exhort the governor to call in external assistance, in the form of the Army Corps of Engineers.

“As a result of these repeated outages...our people have truly suffered, businesses have been shuttered, school has been dismissed, and our community has endured untold stress and economic loss,” Senator Carrion wrote in a letter to Governor Bryan sent on Wednesday.

Noting the extant state of emergency declared on April 24, Mr. Carrion declared that the governor should make full use of his emergency powers by “immediately request[ing] technical assistance from the United States Army Corps of Engineers as to the operation of our power plants and grid.”

Mr. Carrion notes that the Water and Power Authority’s problems are not merely of a financial nature. “There are major issues with how power is generated and distributed,” he argued. Having had meetings with USACE officials following hurricanes Irma and Maria, the lawmaker says he is convinced that the Corps “can provide the necessary expertise to help WAPA better manage its equipment and resources.”

Residents of the territory have lost faith in WAPA, Mr. Carrion argued. Indeed, the Consortium’s interactions with the public on the issue seem to support this assessment. Having [canvassed for responses](#) in St. Croix earlier in the week, on Wednesday, our journalists were on St. Thomas to ask how people felt in light of the recent spate of outages. “I’ve been here since 1989 and it has not gotten any better,” said Taska Page. “It’s just a way of life for the power to go out constantly.”

Another St. Thomian, who preferred not to give their name, said that the service from WAPA has been getting worse over the years. “I feel that we’re being ripped off...it makes you wonder what’s been going on,” they stated.

According to Sen. Carrion, many Virgin Islanders “justifiably fear we could go dark for an extended period.” With an unstable grid, hurricane season already here and WAPA’s chief executive officer set to leave the job in the next few weeks, “the time for action is now,” the lawmaker urged.