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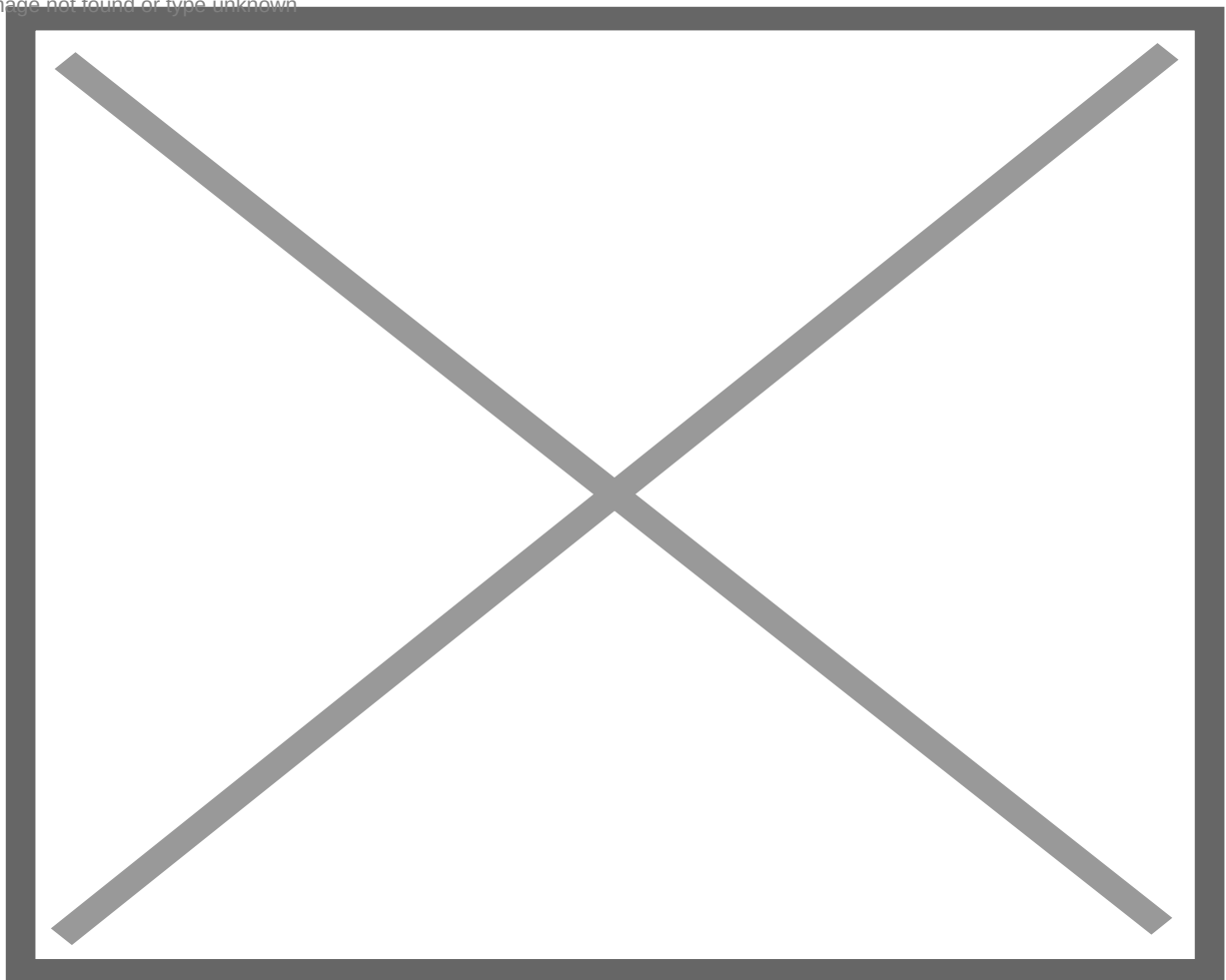
Roger Merrit Announces Non-Renewal of His Contract, Hesitant to Comment on Reported WMA Sick-Out

WMA Executive Roger Merrit admits to recent employee absences but denies sick-out characterization, and announces his contract will not be renewed

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Outgoing Waste Management Authority Executive Director, Roger Merrit. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Roger Merrit, executive director of the V.I. Waste Management Authority hesitated to confirm whether service disruptions were the result of an apparent [sick out staged by staff](#) of the authority for a second consecutive day, as he defended the WMA's FY2025 budget request on Wednesday.

Mr. Merrit, when asked about the alleged severe staffing shortage by Senator Novelle Francis Jr. during the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance hearing, initially claimed that the authority “can't speak on personnel matters because that's confidential.”

It's a response that did not satisfy Sen. Francis, who clarified that he was not seeking specifics. “What is confidential? That you have employees on a sick-out?” Mr. Merrit's response was deemed as “unacceptable” as the Senate president insisted that “the public needs to know, and as well as this body...that's not privileged information.”?

After much probing and following the announcement by Senator Donna Frett-Gregory that the matter has already been reported by local news outlets, Mr. Merrit finally admitted that the WMA has had “some absences recently,” but stopped short of describing it as a sick-out. “They haven't been consistent. You mentioned a sick-out. I wouldn't say that.”

Mr. Merrit was also cautious in sharing how many employees have not turned up for work, telling Sen. Francis that less than 5% of their total staff complement of 180 are involved – which would mean 9 or fewer employees off the job. Though indicating that the work action was limited to St. Croix, Mr. Merrit indicated that absences have been reported in “different divisions.” It has been reported by the Consortium that the employees in question are employed under the Wastewater Division.

Though hesitant to respond to questions on industrial action at the entity that he manages, Mr. Merrit did confirm that his contract as executive director of the Waste Management Authority was not renewed, and that he'll leave the authority on August 23. Mr. Merrit [returned to the Authority](#) in 2020 after [leaving with little explanation in 2018](#). A reason for the non-renewal of his contract was not shared as of press time.