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Prepare Meals in Advance, Limit AC Use: WAPA Announces New Campaign to Ease Strain on Power Grid

As excessive heat and Saharan dust push temperatures above 108°F, WAPA calls for community participation in conserving energy to prevent more frequent power outages

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Karl Knight, left, speaks as Governor Bryan listens during a Bryan-Roach transition team meeting back in 2019. By. FILE PHOTO

Amid an ongoing heatwave impacting the U.S. Virgin Islands, the V.I. Water and Power Authority has launched a "Power Conservation Campaign" aimed at reducing the strain on the territory's power grid. WAPA's call to action comes as the National Weather Service in San Juan

issued an [Excessive Heat Warning](#) on Monday for St. Croix, San Juan, and parts of Puerto Rico, with heat indices exceed 108 degrees. The situation is exacerbated by Saharan dust, which has further elevated daytime temperatures while preventing the usual overnight cooling.

WAPA's appeal for conservation follows its ongoing struggles to maintain consistent power to its customers, with frequent power outages affecting daily life in the territory. The high cost of electricity in the U.S. Virgin Islands— the highest in the United States—has significantly impacted the local economy, with many shuttered businesses citing unsustainable energy costs as a main factor for their closure.

WAPA's campaign encourages residents to adopt energy-saving practices, particularly during peak hours from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Suggested measures include preparing multiple meals for the week to reduce extended cooking times, limiting the use of high-energy appliances during peak hours, setting air conditioning thermostats between 75-78 degrees Fahrenheit, and unplugging electronic devices when not in use. Ratepayers are also advised to delay running dishwashers, washing machines, and dryers until non-peak hours, and to wash full loads using cold water, air-drying clothes when possible.

WAPA CEO Karl Knight emphasized the importance of community involvement in addressing the current power crisis. "WAPA is acutely aware of the struggles that these recent weeks of unreliable power have imposed on our customers," said Mr. Knight. He stressed the necessity of energy conservation, stating that it could not only reduce the immediate threat of outages but also promote long-term sustainability and reliability for the territory's power supply. "We have got to do this together," he urged.

The power grid in the U.S. Virgin Islands is currently experiencing unprecedented demand, according to WAPA, raising the risk of more frequent and widespread outages if energy consumption is not curtailed. Despite the urgency of the campaign, WAPA acknowledged that customers may not see immediate changes in their utility bills as a result of their conservation efforts. Nonetheless, the authority is urging residents and businesses to participate in the campaign to protect the energy infrastructure and mitigate the likelihood of extensive power failures. Customers with billing disputes are encouraged to contact WAPA's customer service, which will operate with extended hours for the next three Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

In addition to reducing energy consumption during peak hours, WAPA provided a series of other energy-saving tips, such as setting air conditioning units to moderate temperatures, changing air filters to ensure efficient operation, and turning off lights and appliances when not in use. The authority is also encouraging the public to support the "Power Conservation Campaign" by sharing energy-saving tips on social media using the hashtag #EveryWattCounts.