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Heavy Rainfall Causes Severe Wastewater Service Interruptions Across USVI

The LBJ Pump Station on St. Croix and a sewer line on St. Thomas have sustained significant damage. VIWMA crews are working around the clock to minimize the impact on residents.

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Flooding in St. Thomas on Thursday, Nov. 21, 2024.

The V.I. Waste Management Authority has said that it is actively addressing critical wastewater service disruptions following heavy rainfall that caused widespread damage to key infrastructure on St. Thomas and St. Croix. Both incidents, which occurred on Wednesday, November 20, have significantly impacted the territory's above-ground and underground wastewater systems. Heavy rainfall continued to impact St. Thomas on Thursday.

On St. Croix, the LBJ Pump Station experienced a mechanical failure, leaving it offline and disrupting wastewater services in the area, according to the release. Crews are currently working to install an auxiliary pump to restore operations as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, on St. Thomas, a sewer line between Banco Popular Altona Branch and the Cancryn Pump Station collapsed, prompting immediate action from WMA.

To manage overflowing manholes in affected areas, pump trucks are operating around the clock. The team is also in the process of installing a bypass or pump-around system to reduce the duration of service interruptions for residents.

According to WMA Interim Executive Director Daryl Griffith, the damage stems from storm-related debris and the illegal dumping of Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOGs), which have compounded the strain on the territory's aging sewer infrastructure. "Interim repairs are being conducted to keep the system operational until a more permanent solution can be implemented, which involves prudent replacements in the future," Mr. Griffith said. He noted that funding for replacing the LBJ Sewershed is now available and that similar funding for the Cancryn Pump Station will soon follow.

As repairs continue, WMA has warned of potential sewage overflows from manholes in impacted areas. Both motorists and pedestrians are urged to exercise caution, as sewage runoff may contain harmful contaminants. Residents should avoid areas with visible runoff, including gutters, puddles, and drainage basins, particularly those that appear discolored or emit foul odors.

The authority acknowledged the inconvenience caused by these disruptions and expressed gratitude to the community for their patience and understanding. "We recognize the inconvenience this situation may cause and appreciate your cooperation," the authority stated.