

WAPA Begins Rotating Outages on St. Thomas–St. John After LPG Delay Forces Grid Shortfall

WAPA activated all diesel units after an LPG shipment delay cut generation at the Randolph Harley plant, prompting two-hour rotating outages. The Authority said the disruption reflects structural dependence on fuel deliveries.

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

Rotating power outages will begin at noon on Wednesday for customers in the St. Thomas–St. John District, the V.I. Water and Power Authority announced, after a delayed shipment of LPG fuel to the Randolph Harley Power Plant reduced available generation and exposed the limits of a

grid still heavily dependent on imported fuel.

According to the authority, the delay immediately affected the district's generation mix. While light fuel oil and liquified petroleum gas have supported demand on St. Thomas and St. John, any interruption in deliveries—whether operational or related to transit—can reduce capacity. WAPA said the latest disruption illustrates the need for a broader and more flexible energy portfolio, noting that progress with renewables and storage in other parts of the territory—especially on St. Croix—has already shown how additional resources can help cushion short-term challenges.

The utility said its ongoing investments in solar, storage, and system modernization aim to provide the same level of resilience for St. Thomas and St. John, reducing reliance on rotating outages and strengthening long-term energy security across the Virgin Islands.

Once the delay was confirmed, WAPA said it activated all available diesel generation in an attempt to keep as much of the grid online as possible. However, the temporary loss of LPG generation created a capacity shortfall that required a structured outage plan to safely balance electrical load. WAPA said the two-hour rotation schedule, including feeder block sequences, will be released publicly and updated throughout the day as system conditions change.

WAPA also acknowledged the larger structural issue: the district's dependence on maritime fuel shipments leaves it vulnerable to any delay at sea or at the terminal. To address that, the WAPA said it is advancing a long-term strategy focused on expanding solar projects, incorporating additional battery storage, diversifying the energy mix, and upgrading generation systems to enhance reliability.

“These renewable projects are not just environmental choices—they provide operational resilience,” said WAPA CEO and Executive Director Karl Knight. “Unlike fuel shipments, once the sun comes up we have solar power and continued power with batteries. Accelerating renewable development is essential to increasing energy security across the Territory.”

According to the authority, the transition underway is designed to prevent future disruptions of this kind and reduce the frequency of rotating outages.