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After Brief Relief, St. John Was Plunged Back Into Darkness and Still Without Power Monday Afternoon

After WAPA said apparent vandalism disrupted St. John's transmission line Saturday night, power was briefly restored Sunday morning before another failure knocked the island back offline, leaving residents still without electricity Monday afternoon.

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ST. JOHN — After WAPA said [apparent vandalism](#) triggered the major outage that knocked out service to St. John late Saturday, the authority told the public Monday that restoration efforts were then complicated by a second failure on the backup transmission route, extending the interruption and exposing how difficult the repair effort had become.

During a community update Monday afternoon, WAPA Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Karl Knight said St. John lost power at approximately 9:57 p.m. Saturday when the transmission line serving the island was disrupted. After line crews inspected the system and found damage to the transmission infrastructure, WAPA determined that repairing the original line would be extremely difficult and time consuming because of where the damage occurred.

To speed up restoration, the authority attempted to bring the older transmission line that had previously served St. John back into service as a temporary solution. Knight said that line was tied in on the Red Hook side Saturday night, and crews traveled to St. John early Sunday morning to complete the connection there. Power was restored to the island at 11:46 a.m. Sunday.

That restoration did not last. Knight said St. John suffered another outage at 2:32 p.m., about three hours after service returned. Crews then discovered a fire in the junction box connecting the submarine cable to the terrestrial landline on the Red Hook side of the transmission system.

WAPA's working assessment, he said, is that the earlier Saturday night event likely caused damage that was not visibly apparent at the time, and that hidden damage led to the second failure once the system was re-energized.

Crews then began repairing both the backup transmission line and the original line. But around 9:00 p.m. Sunday, WAPA made the decision to stop pursuing the backup route and focus fully on restoring the primary transmission line after determining that some of the additional parts needed for the backup system were not in inventory.

Knight said crews worked overnight, completing splicing repairs on the St. Thomas side of the line before carrying out testing. They then completed splicing repairs on the St. John side and began testing the affected primary cable. Two of the three phases passed testing, he said, but the third phase failed. Because all three phases are needed to fully restore and energize service to St. John, crews were continuing to examine that failed phase Monday and were considering whether it would have to be bypassed.

WAPA said crews would continue working through the day and into the night with the goal of restoring power safely. Knight said the latest field update put expected restoration at approximately 4:00 p.m. Monday, though he acknowledged that timeline had been a "moving target" over the prior 24 hours. He also said the authority was evaluating additional contingency steps and emergency support options that could help accelerate restoration if necessary.

In his remarks, Knight acknowledged the strain the outage placed on St. John residents and businesses, noting that power interruptions affect far more than lighting. He said outages disrupt homes, businesses, families, water systems and daily life, and said WAPA understood the hardship the community was experiencing, especially after another major outage had occurred recently.

Knight also returned to the original cause of the disruption, saying a police report had been filed Saturday night by WAPA's lines superintendent and that the matter was under investigation by the V.I. Police Department. He said the transmission line carries significantly higher voltage than what is used in a typical home and warned that contact with infrastructure at that level is extremely dangerous and could result in severe injury.

WAPA suspects that when the line was being severed, there was some kind of arc that prevented it from being completely cut, according to Knight. Because of that, he said the authority believes someone may have suffered severe burns or other signs of injury. He urged anyone with

information about such an incident on Saturday night to contact VIPD.

Looking ahead, Knight said WAPA had already scheduled a town hall meeting for St. John residents before the incident occurred. The meeting is set for Tuesday, March 24 at 5:30 p.m. at the St. John Legislature Building. He said the authority plans to discuss the outage, provide updates on ongoing infrastructure projects, and outline steps being taken to strengthen and modernize the power system serving St. John in an effort to avoid similar crises in the future.

Knight said members of WAPA's leadership team and technical staff will attend to share information and answer questions from the community. He closed by saying the people of St. John deserve a power system that is reliable and resilient, and that while the weekend had been difficult, crews remained focused on restoring service and strengthening the system moving forward.

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