

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Says Water Service Also Affected as Three Largest Generators Remain Down

WAPA said ongoing generation shortfalls in St. Thomas and St. John are also affecting water service in some areas, as Units 15, 23 and 27 remain down, rotations continue and unexpected districtwide outages remain possible while crews work to restore power

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The V.I. Water and Power Authority says ongoing generation problems in the St. Thomas-St. John district are now also affecting water service in some areas, as the authority continues round-the-clock efforts to stabilize the power system while relying on a reduced generation fleet.

In an update issued Thursday, WAPA said a specialized technician arrived Wednesday and is now working alongside WAPA crews on diagnostics and restoration efforts for Unit 15. The authority also said critical parts for Unit 27 have been received, allowing crews to continue progress toward bringing that unit back online, while a second technician arrived Thursday morning to help expedite those repairs.

WAPA said the territory's power system remains under strain because three of its 10 generators — Units 15, 23, and 27 — are currently down for maintenance repairs. According to the authority, the loss of those three largest units has significantly reduced available generation capacity and created a more fragile operating environment.

The authority said it is currently relying on its fleet of Wärtsilä generators to meet demand, but does not have enough capacity at certain times of the day, making power rotations necessary.

WAPA also warned that the rotation schedule, though designed to reduce strain on the grid and help prevent wider outages, is not fail-safe. The authority said unexpected district-wide outages may still occur until additional capacity is restored, pointing to outages Thursday morning at 9:19 a.m. and again at 10:49 a.m. while customers were being restored because of grid instability.

"The rotation schedule supports system stability, but it cannot eliminate all disruptions," Lemuel Lavinier, Chief Operating Officer of Electric Systems WAPA, noted. "We continue working urgently to bring additional capacity online and encourage customers to remain prepared."

While the authority works through the current shortage, it also pointed to the importance of ongoing and future energy investments. WAPA said additional solar generation and battery energy storage systems would help close the current gap in generation capacity by supplying supplemental energy to the system. It said that need reinforces continued support for renewable energy projects now under development, including the solar farms in Fortuna and Bovoni.

At the same time, WAPA said long-term relief is expected through the Prudent Replacement Program, which is intended to modernize the generation fleet and replace aging infrastructure.

The authority also advised that some customers may experience water service issues while the power challenges continue. According to WAPA, intermittent water service or low pressure may affect some areas, particularly downtown Charlotte Amalie and higher elevation communities.

WAPA said reduced water production tied to the power situation, combined with a major leak at Polyberg Hill, has affected system inventory. Crews, the authority said, are actively stabilizing water production and advancing repairs, with improvements expected.