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WAPA Extends Haugland Emergency Restoration Contract Through 2027 Hurricane Season as Transformer Order Remains Pending

The board approved a 536-day no-cost extension for Haugland to supplement WAPA during restoration, while officials said contracts will be rebid after hurricane season and a \$3 million order for long-lead transformers remains pending amid storm risks.

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Haugland crews install composite poles on St. Croix's east end following the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Haugland Virgin Islands has been granted a no-cost contract extension of more than a year to keep supplemental line crews, equipment and manpower available to assist the Water and Power Authority during emergency power restoration scenarios, even as WAPA continues awaiting a \$3 million order for storm-related transformer equipment.

The 536-day extension was approved during a WAPA board meeting on Thursday, with officials saying the agreement is intended to ensure coverage through the end of the 2027 hurricane season.

“This contract basically is for Haughland support...should there be any unforeseen natural disasters like we have had in the 2017 hurricane season,” WAPA Director of Project Management Maxwell George told board members.

Board member Hubert Turnbull questioned why WAPA was relying on a large off-island company for the support role.

“We don’t have any other local electricians who can assist with this job, as opposed to such a big entity?” he asked.

Mr. George responded that Haugland has the specific capacity, skills and expertise needed to complement WAPA’s internal capabilities. Executive Director Karl Knight and General Counsel Dionne Sinclair further clarified that WAPA maintains multiple disaster backup agreements, including one with BBC Electric.

Ms. Sinclair said WAPA intends to “go out for a bidding process at the end of this hurricane season for all the contracts,” explaining that Haugland’s extension gives the utility enough of a buffer to remain covered through the end of the 2027 hurricane season.

Mr. Knight stressed that the contract is for contingency purposes only, not routine operations.

In an emergency power outage scenario, “if it’s manageable with just in-house crews, we’ll manage restoration internally. If we need to pull on a few extra resources, we’ll pull on a few extra resources. If it’s a real major event, we start tapping CARILEC and APPA to provide mutual aid to supplement the contract resources we have already,” he explained.

While board members approved the Haugland extension to ensure manpower during emergency outages, WAPA officials acknowledged that supply challenges remain a concern.

Mr. Knight said a \$3 million HUD-funded order for “self-protecting” transformers is still pending.

“It’s getting very late in the season,” he said.

Describing the transformers as “long lead items,” the WAPA CEO said he still hopes “we can still get that in before the season ends, and of course, I’m hoping that we don’t need it because the season is uneventful.”

Mr. Knight acknowledged that “it would have been helpful to have that secured in advance of the storm season,” but said he remains optimistic that the equipment will be delivered “in the next few weeks.”