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WAPA Ends Rotating Outages in St. Thomas-St. John District After Unit 27 Repairs

WAPA says repairs to Unit 27 raised output from about 14 megawatts to as much as 18, ending rotating outages in the St. Thomas-St. John district while planned overnight outages July 13 and 14 will support Feeder 13 and 7E Ridge Road work.

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

The V.I. Water and Power Authority said Monday that rotating power outages in the St. Thomas-St. John district have ended for now after repairs to Unit 27 at the Randolph Harley Power Plant raised available generation, a notable improvement days after WAPA warned that the district

remained vulnerable to load shedding until more capacity returned to the system.

During a June 25 update to WAPA's governing board, Executive Director Karl Knight said ongoing rotations were being [driven by a generation shortfall, with Units 15 and 23 offline, Unit 27 operating below capacity](#), and two Wartsila engines also offline. Chief Operating Officer Lemuel Lavinier estimated at the time that WAPA was short by 4 megawatts during midday peak hours and 8 megawatts during the evening peak.

Mr. Knight said then that WAPA was "not predicting rotations, we are basically saying that this is a possibility" while the district remained exposed to equipment failures. He also described the situation as "touch and go" until additional generation returned, and said, "It is still a precarious situation."

By Monday, however, WAPA said repairs to Unit 27 had allowed the utility to end the rotations that had affected the St. Thomas-St. John district.

WAPA's Director of Corporate Communications Shanell Spencer joined the Government House press briefing by video link and thanked customers for enduring the recent intermittent service.

"Thank you to everyone who adjusted their routines, checked on neighbors, supported local businesses, and remained patient," Ms. Spencer said. "We know that every outage affects real lives, from families trying to keep cool to businesses trying to serve customers."

According to Ms. Spencer, "rotational outages ended on Friday after repairs to Unit 27 were completed." Before the repairs, Unit 27's production was capped at approximately 14 megawatts. The unit is now producing up to 18 megawatts, with WAPA working to gradually increase its output.

"Today it is producing up to 18 megawatts, and our operators are carefully increasing its output each evening with the goal of safely reaching 20 megawatts without interruption to customers," Ms. Spencer said.

WAPA said the added generation has already given the grid more operational flexibility. Over the weekend, a cooling fan mount issue caused a disruption in service, but Ms. Spencer said crews were able to complete repairs and restore power more quickly because of the additional capacity now available.

Ms. Spencer said that "because of the additional generation now available, our crews were able to make the repair quickly and restore service much faster than we could have just a few weeks ago."

The interruption still affected the horse race taking place at the Clinton E. Phipps Sr. racetrack on St. Thomas.

"We understand how even short interruptions can be disappointing for participants, spectators, vendors, and organizers," Ms. Spencer acknowledged.

With Unit 27 back online, WAPA is preparing to carry out planned overnight outages to complete additional grid work. The outages are scheduled for July 13 and 14 between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. and will allow technicians to finalize the Feeder 13 bypass project and complete the Feeder 7E Ridge Road circuit redundancy project.

Ms. Spencer said the work is necessary because “parts of the underground section of Feeder 13 are nearing the end of their useful life.”

“Completing this bypass will allow us to remove and replace aging underground cables while also connecting the 7E or Ridge Road distribution circuit to St. John.”

For residents on St. John, Ms. Spencer said the standby generation units ordered for the island are expected to be in the territory by the end of July.

WAPA also said its renewable energy plans remain on schedule.

“The Fortuna solar farm remains on track to begin operating before the end of this year,” said Ms. Spencer, describing the projects as the “building blocks of a more reliable, more resilient electric system.”

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