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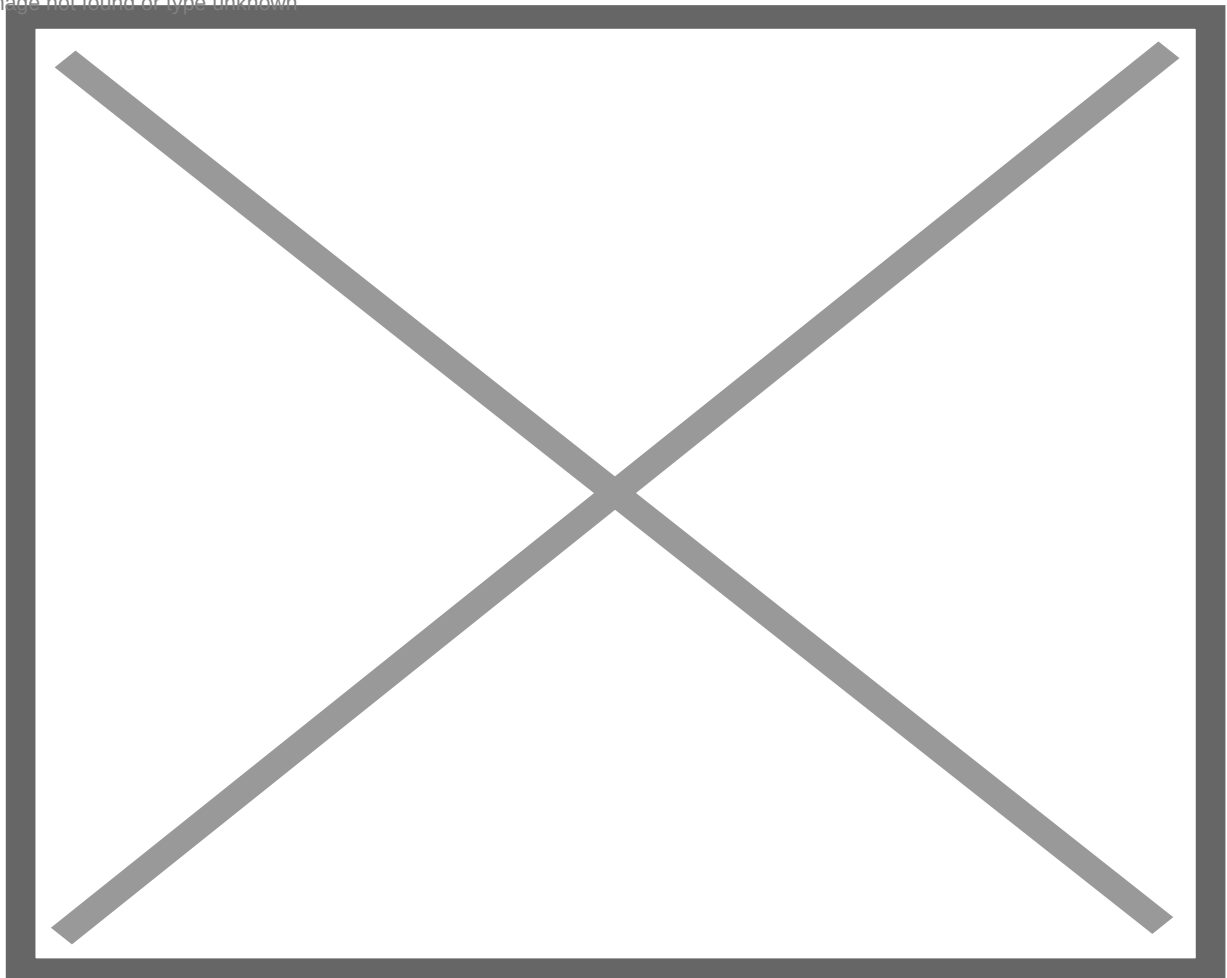
Christiansted Wastewater Overflow Ends; WAPA Suspends Richmond Water Production as Frederiksted Boil Advisory Continues

VIWMA says emergency repairs ended the LBJ wastewater overflow early Sunday, while WAPA has suspended Richmond water production pending test results. A separate E. coli boil-water advisory remains in effect for affected Frederiksted customers as well.

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Aerial view of the Seven Seas reverse-osmosis plant at WAPA's Richmond facility on St. Croix, where water production was temporarily suspended while officials await water-quality test results. By. SEVEN SEAS.

ST. CROIX — Emergency repairs have ended the wastewater overflow caused by the collapsed force main serving Christiansted's LBJ Pump Station, but St. Croix continues to face significant water-related precautions: WAPA has temporarily suspended reverse-osmosis production at its Richmond facility pending water-quality testing, while a separate boil-water advisory remains in effect in Frederiksted following repeated detection of E. coli.

The V.I. Waste Management Authority completed repairs to the failed force main early Sunday, returning the LBJ Pump Station to service at approximately 2:35 a.m. The failure began Thursday night and caused wastewater to overflow in the Christiansted area.

Although the overflow has stopped, previously issued public-health advisories remain in effect for affected coastal areas around Christiansted and LBJ/Condo Row. Residents, businesses and boaters are being advised to avoid swimming, fishing and unnecessary contact with potentially affected coastal waters, while children and pets should also be kept away until officials determine conditions are safe.

At the same time, WAPA is awaiting water-quality test results from its Richmond intake. Following the wastewater incident, the authority temporarily suspended reverse-osmosis production there and reduced pumping through St. Croix's distribution system to conserve existing potable-water reserves and guard against possible contamination.

Those precautions are occurring against the backdrop of prolonged drought, which has already reduced available water reserves. Government House warned that customers across St. Croix could experience low pressure or temporary interruptions while testing is completed and normal Richmond production remains suspended.

Water samples have been collected from the Richmond intake. If the results confirm that conditions are safe, WAPA is prepared to restart production immediately, although system pressure would recover gradually as supplies are replenished.

"Protecting the health and safety of our residents remains our first priority, and from the outset we have brought every relevant agency together to respond with urgency and coordination," Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said. "Completing the force main repair is an important step forward, and our attention now is on protecting the integrity of the potable water system and preparing for whatever additional measures may be necessary.

"The rainfall we are receiving is welcomed, particularly after the prolonged dry conditions we have experienced. We are encouraged that it will provide some much-needed relief to Virgin Islands households, help replenish cisterns and, in turn, ease some of the pressure on the public water system. At the same time, I encourage everyone to remain attentive and continue following the alerts and guidance issued by VITEMA and WAPA in the coming days as conditions evolve."

Separate E. Coli Advisory Remains in Frederiksted

Meanwhile, a separate drinking-water issue remains active in Frederiksted, where WAPA's Tier 1 boil-water advisory continues following repeated detection of E. coli at the Frederiksted Dock sampling point.

E. coli was detected there in a sample collected August 24 and again during follow-up testing August 26. Samples from the designated upstream location at Hannah's Rest and downstream at Frederiksted Ballpark tested negative for both E. coli and Total Coliform, but additional testing remains underway.

The V.I. Housing Authority has activated its St. Croix asset-management, property-management, maintenance and resident-services teams to conduct direct outreach in affected communities. VIHA said particular attention is being given to seniors, households with infants and young children, and residents who are medically vulnerable or have compromised immune systems.

Residents and employees in affected areas are being instructed to boil tap water for at least one full minute before using it or rely on bottled water for drinking, cooking, food preparation and making ice. Boiled water should be allowed to cool and stored in clean, covered containers.

“The health and safety of our residents and employees remain our highest priority. We are asking everyone in our affected St. Croix communities to take this advisory seriously and follow WAPA’s boil-water instructions until public health and utility officials determine that normal water use can safely resume,” said VIHA Executive Director Dwayne Alexander.

“Our management teams are making every reasonable effort to ensure that residents—particularly our seniors and other vulnerable households—are aware of these precautions. We will continue to monitor information from WAPA and DPNR and communicate important updates as they become available.”

VIHA residents are also being asked to report discoloration, unusual water conditions, significant loss of pressure or other water-related concerns to their respective management offices.

Island-Wide Conservation Urged

With Richmond production suspended and drought already weighing on available reserves, WAPA is asking all St. Croix customers to limit potable-water use to essential needs.

Residents are being urged to postpone vehicle and pressure washing and lawn watering; take shorter showers; run washing machines and dishwashers only with full loads; refrain from filling cisterns with potable water; avoid stockpiling large quantities of water; collect rainwater safely for appropriate non-potable uses; and promptly repair or report leaks.

WAPA’s St. Croix standpipe also remains closed until further notice.

Government House said officials are monitoring runoff associated with the tropical wave for possible effects on areas impacted by the wastewater incident. The administration is also evaluating contingencies should water-service conditions fail to improve over the next 48 hours, including whether prolonged disruptions could affect normal government operations.