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Emergency Water Distribution Begins in Frederiksted as Drought, Richmond Shutdown Strain St. Croix Supply

The former Arthur A. Richards Junior High School campus has been added to Sunday's 6-8pm emergency water distribution, joining the Midre Almeric Cummings facility and Reinholdt Jackson Sports Complex. Residents must bring containers; water is non-potable.

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ST. CROIX — Emergency water distribution will begin in Frederiksted Sunday evening as prolonged drought, reduced pumping and the precautionary shutdown of WAPA's Richmond reverse-osmosis operation continue to cause low water pressure and service interruptions across portions of St. Croix.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. authorized private water haulers to provide non-potable water from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, August 30, at three Frederiksted locations: the parking lot adjacent to the Midre Almeric Cummings Recreational, Youth Facility and the Reinholdt Jackson Sports Complex, and the former Arthur A. Richards Junior High School campus.

Residents must bring their own containers and will be limited to 25 gallons per person per day, equivalent to five 5-gallon containers.

The distributed water is not potable and should not be used for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth or other consumption.

The emergency measure comes as drought conditions have reduced St. Croix's available water inventory while a separate wastewater infrastructure failure in Christiansted has affected WAPA's production capacity.

The V.I. Waste Management Authority's recent wastewater force-main rupture prompted WAPA to suspend reverse-osmosis water production at its Richmond facility as a precaution while water-quality testing is completed. Reduced pumping across WAPA's distribution network has compounded the problem, resulting in low pressure and interrupted service in several areas.

"We know that families are being affected by low pressure and water interruptions, and we are not going to wait for those conditions to worsen before acting," Governor Bryan said. "We are putting resources into the community now to provide some immediate relief while WAPA works to restore water production, rebuild its inventory and stabilize the distribution system."

VIWMA completed repairs to the damaged force main early Sunday morning, restoring the LBJ Pump Station to operation. WAPA, however, was still awaiting water-quality test results before resuming normal reverse-osmosis production at Richmond.

The administration said rainfall associated with Sunday's weather system could provide some relief after the territory's prolonged dry spell, particularly by replenishing household cisterns and reducing some of the demand being placed on the public water system.

Government House said conditions will continue to be monitored and that emergency water-distribution operations could be adjusted or expanded if necessary.

Residents are being encouraged to conserve potable water and monitor updates from Government House, VITEMA and WAPA as restoration efforts continue.