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Bryan Declares St. Croix State of Emergency as Water System Recovery Continue

Executive Order 548-2026 formally declares a St. Croix state of emergency effective Aug. 30, keeps the Emergency Operations Center and National Guard activated, and suspends competitive bidding rules for purchases tied to emergency water distribution.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. participates in a previous emergency briefing at the St. Croix VITEMA Emergency Operations Center, illustrating the coordinated response structure now activated for the island's water emergency. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

ST. CROIX — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has formally declared a state of emergency for St. Croix over ongoing water-service challenges, keeping the territory's emergency operations structure,

National Guard and other government resources mobilized while WAPA rebuilds water inventory and gradually restores pressure across the island.

Executive Order No. 548-2026 makes the declaration effective August 30 and leaves it in place until the governor determines that the threat has passed or recovery has advanced enough that emergency authorities are no longer necessary. The order also suspends normal competitive-bidding procedures for purchases of goods and services related to distributing water to residents affected by low pressure.

The action comes even as the conditions that triggered the latest water disruption have begun improving. WAPA resumed reverse-osmosis production at its Richmond facility Sunday evening after the V.I. Waste Management Authority repaired a ruptured wastewater force main in Christiansted and water-quality testing was completed.

“This action does not mean conditions are worsening,” Mr. Bryan said. “It means we are keeping the full weight of the Government’s resources available until the system is stabilized and the immediate needs of affected residents have been addressed.”

Prolonged drought had already reduced St. Croix’s available water inventory before the Christiansted force-main rupture prompted WAPA to temporarily suspend Richmond production as a precaution. The interruption further depleted stored water and contributed to low pressure and service interruptions in portions of the island. WAPA is now rebuilding inventory while gradually repressurizing its distribution system.

“This is about making sure we maintain the resources and coordination necessary to see this response through to completion,” Mr. Bryan said. “The conditions that caused these disruptions have significantly improved, but we know some residents may continue to experience low pressure or intermittent service as WAPA rebuilds its water inventory and repressurizes the system. We are going to continue supporting the people of St. Croix until service is fully stabilized.”

The administration had already deployed private water haulers to provide non-potable water to affected Frederiksted residents and mobilized government personnel to support distribution sites. The executive order now formally continues that multi-agency response.

Under the order, the St. Croix Emergency Operations Center remains activated, with VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen serving as Territorial Coordinating Officer. Health Commissioner Justa “Tita” Encarnacion has been designated incident commander, while the V.I. Department of Health serves as lead agency in coordination with VITEMA.

The Virgin Islands National Guard is also authorized to continue supporting the response. National Guard personnel have been assisting alongside the V.I. Police Department and other agencies with water-distribution operations and maintaining order at distribution locations.

The underlying executive order directs all agencies under the governor’s authority to provide personnel, equipment, supplies and other resources needed for the response. Agencies outside the governor’s direct authority are also being asked to assist where necessary.

The emergency declaration additionally allows officials to bypass ordinary competitive procurement requirements for goods and services needed specifically for water distribution during the emergency, providing the government greater flexibility to sustain the response while pressure and service recover.

Government House said response operations will be adjusted as WAPA restores pressure and service. Residents are being encouraged to continue monitoring updates from Government House, VITEMA and WAPA.

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