

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Issues Plan Of Action For Hurricane Gonzalo

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The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has activated its internal and external emergency plans in order to operate efficiently and safely as Hurricane Gonzalo moves in.

Executive Director, Hugo V. Hodge, Jr., said WAPA is closely monitoring the weather system and that under storm conditions, all employees are designated as essential and will report to work as scheduled to assist in the restoration of the electric and water systems in the event damage occurs.

Hodge and WAPA's Chief Operating Officer and Emergency Response Coordinator Gregory Rhymer have met with emergency response teams and determined that WAPA

has adequate fuel and water storage to serve all customers; power plant personnel are currently securing generating equipment, water plants, fuel dock facilities, buildings and all other areas to minimize possible damage; line and engineering departments have designated damage assessment teams and restoration crews throughout the territory to immediately address problems in the field once the storm has passed; WAPA's contracted restoration companies will be placed on standby if weather projections indicate that assistance will be needed for high voltage work and other support services; local companies will also be on standby to provide support services; emergency radio and telephone systems have been checked and determined fully operational; and WAPA representatives will staff the emergency call centers to take calls from customers experiencing electricity and/or water service interruptions.

To report power or water issues after the storm passes, St. Thomas/St. John/Water Island customers may call 774-3552, press #4 or to 774-1424. On St. Croix, customers may call 773-2250 and press #7 or 773-0150. Customers should be prepared to give accurate information including clear directions to the home or business with the problem.

Feeder listings and operational updates are available at www.viwapa.vi. Updates are also available by registering at www.vialert.gov, on WAPA's facebook page, or by calling 340-773-2250 or 774-3552 and pressing #6 for a recorded message. Updates including boiling water advisories will also be aired on available local radio stations. Feeder listings may also be obtained in WAPA's customer office lobbies.

WAPA will maintain service for as long as possible and will not intentionally turn off power as the hurricane passes through. Rhymer said the "three strike rule" will apply: if a feeder loses service, control room operators will try three times to safely restore the feeder. If unsuccessful, the feeder will remain without service until the storm passes and systems are evaluated for damage.

Residents are cautioned to always stay 10 feet or more away from power lines and any apparatus that is connected to a power line; assume all lines are energized and immediately report any problems or plans to work around energized lines to the emergency numbers.

Power customers should have an electrician secure their building's weather head, which is the service point where the building's overhead electrical service connects to the feeder wires.

Water customers should locate and mark their potable water safety valve if it becomes necessary to turn off the water due to a pipe break, and then report the damage to the emergency numbers. Be sure all faucets are locked in the off position.

The Authority urges all residents to practice safety before, during and after the storm.