

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Juan Luis Hospital: We Responded Appropriately During Island-wide Power Outage

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (JFL) on St. Croix said it took the necessary steps to ensure patient safety during an extended island-wide power outage that lasted close to three hours on Sunday morning.

A press release issued by the hospital late Sunday night states that "immediate and emergency actions were taken to ensure the safety and protection of all patients and their visiting families as a result of the island-wide power outage on St. Croix, which temporarily affected the hospital." JFL also reports that "its rapid response to quickly resolve the hospital's power outage were successful."

According to the press release, during the outage, Kevin Sealey, director of facilities, along with hospital maintenance workers, "immediately assessed the situation and followed established emergency protocols."

Sealey confirmed the fuses in JFL's generator heat exchanger had blown out, but later said the problem had been corrected.

JFL officials say the hospital's generator passed its weekly test as late as last week, so they are investigating the cause of the power failure "and will take the appropriate actions so that this situation does not happen again."

The hospital says it is scheduled to upgrade its electrical and backup power generating systems in an upcoming capital improvement project.

It is unclear how long the hospital was without power before its generator system kicked in.

"The safety and care of our patients are top priorities, and as soon as we learned of the situation, immediate steps were taken by all affected Hospital units to focus on ensuring that patients were safe and that power was restored as quickly as possible," said JFL CEO Kendall Griffith. "None of JFL's patients were in danger during the power outage."

During the outage, Griffith and JFL Chief of Nursing and VP of Clinical Services Justa "Tita" Encarnacion visited patients and their families. They reported that patient rounds were also conducted following the return of electricity to the hospital.

"During our second round, we thanked patients and visiting families for their patience and made sure that everyone was safe and in good care," Encarnacion said.

The hospital said its call lights were interrupted as a result of the outage. Encarnacion said a designated Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) was assigned to perform constant rounds to ensure all patients were under continuous watch and care, adding that the CMA's rounds were in addition to nursing and medical staff already assigned to those patients.

Furthermore, Encarnacion said the hospital's oxygen and ventilators in the Intensive Care Unit were functioning properly during the power outage, adding that "the ventilators are equipped with a battery backup system."