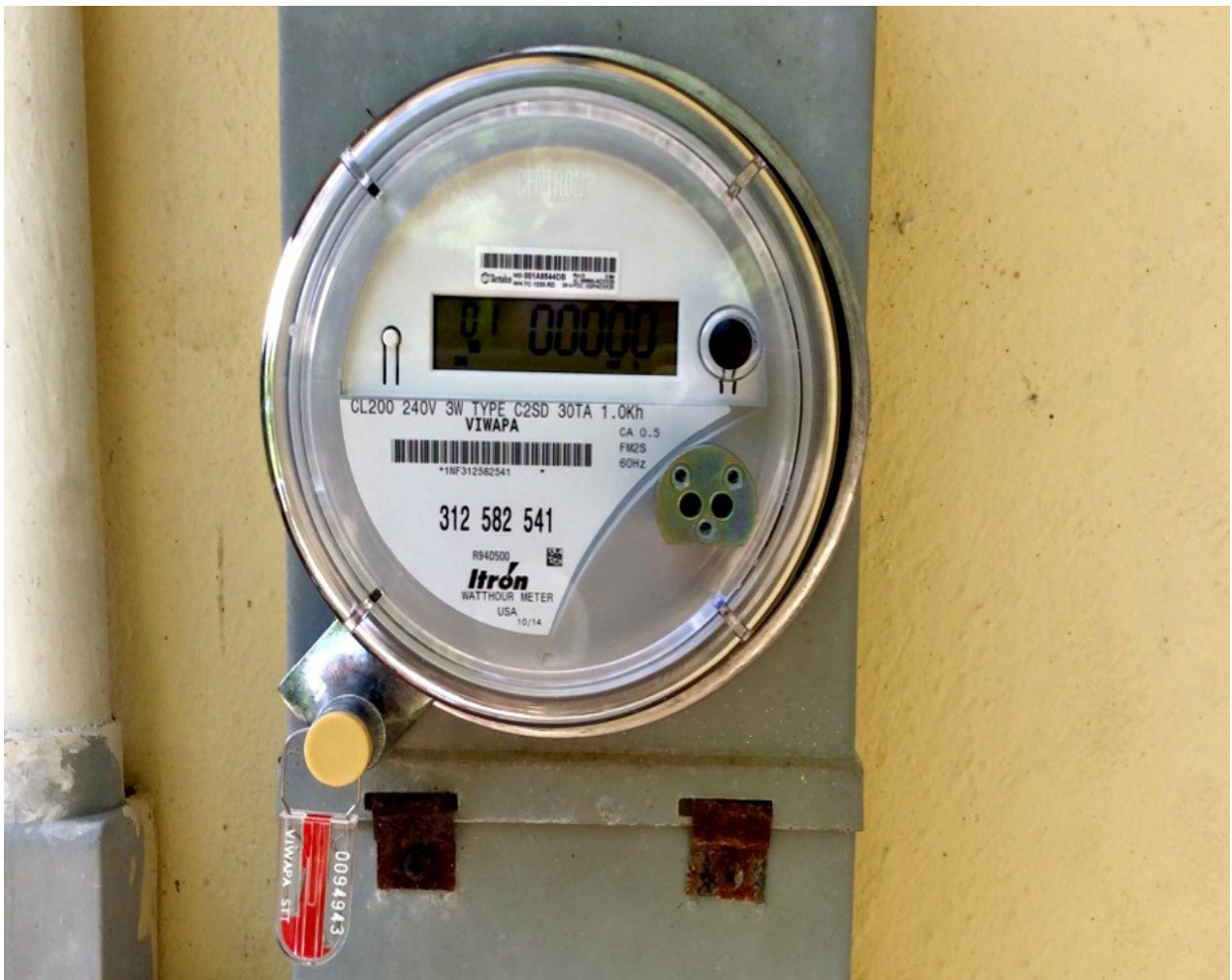


The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA To Commence Smart Meter Work On St. Croix June 9

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has announced that it will begin installation work of its smart meters on the island on Tuesday, having completed 98 percent (about 20,000 installs) of the new power consumption-monitoring device in the St. Thomas-St. John district, according to a press release the semi-autonomous agency issued on Saturday.

Smart meters, officially called Advance Metering Infrastructure (AMI), is an automated system where the meters connect with multiple collectors around the islands and those collectors relay data to collection centers placed throughout territory, and the data is then transferred to WAPA's network and harvested for billing and monitoring purposes,"

said Glenfield Jarvis, electrical engineer at WAPA at an April 26 press event.

WAPA's Executive Director, Hugo V. Hodge, Jr., said the movement on St. Croix represents the next phase of WAPA's implementation of AMI territory-wide.

"As of May 29, WAPA's meter installation contractor, Apex CoVantage, completed installations in the St. Thomas – St. John district. WAPA personnel are now deploying smart meters to commercial customers and in addition, we expect that up to 500 net metering customers will receive the smart meters by the end of July," Hodge said.

"The contractor is mobilizing to St. Croix to begin the installations next week. Mailers were sent to St. Croix account holders last week advising them that installers will be making their rounds to replace the current electrical meters and we will be publishing notices in the territorial newspapers to increase the awareness of St. Croix residents regarding the meter change out," he added.

In an April 26 press conference held to dispel misconceptions about the AMI system, WAPA executives went great lengths to explain, in detail, the benefits of the nascent system.

Jarvis said AMI would "revolutionize" WAPA's billing process and make way for innovative projects the company has in the pipeline. Of the new projects, one of the most standout offerings will be the ability for customers to subscribe to a pay-as-you-go plan. WAPA officials said because the system is technologically advanced, customers will have the option to pay for any amount of power they want to consume — by the week, fortnight or month — or even for a day.

"The AMI system, of which smart meters is a part, will facilitate among other features, meter-reading from the office and allowing customer service representatives to have real time customer account information," Hodge went on.

Another immediate benefit of AMI, according to WAPA, is the system's ability to know within seconds if a customer is experiencing service issues. The system will also serve to reduce meter tampering, quickly identify faults and lay the foundation for the full implementation of a smart electric grid.

"As the installation of smart meters commences next week on St. Croix, it is important for residents to know that Apex CoVantage and WAPA employees will display proper identification when accessing residential or commercial properties to replace the meters, and will be moving about the island in appropriately marked vehicles," Hodge said.

Customers are asked to cooperate fully when these individuals come to the homes or businesses to work on the AMI project. In the event that a meter is not accessible and the resident is not at home, notification will be left indicating that the service man was there and will return to complete the installation.

As the installation phase on St. Croix takes hold, Hodge said WAPA will continue its educational campaign on the new system's safety, while addressing what it calls "ill-placed concerns" about the meter having the ability to monitor private citizens' lives aside from its meter-reading capability.

"Our overall goal at WAPA is to increase our system's efficiency and reliability all while reducing the cost of electrical and potable water service for our residents and business owners. We are well on our way to achieving both objectives," Hodge concluded.

Feature Image: Residential Advanced Metering Infrastructure device.

Image Credit: The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority.

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