

The Virgin Islands Consortium

AC Problem At Juan Luis 'Temporarily' Fixed, Official Says, But Employees Contend Otherwise

VIC News / **Published On July 02, 2015 10:09 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **July 02, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- Employees of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center in various departments have been leaving working early because the heat inside the hospital -- caused by two broken AC units -- becomes unbearable during the height of the day, two JFL employees told *The Consortium* on Thursday. The problem has been ongoing for weeks, and the situation was addressed at the facility's monthly board meeting also held on Thursday.

At the meeting, Board Chairman Dr. Anthony Ricketts asked Dr. Ken Okolo, the hospital's chief operating officer, for an update on the units, stating that some employees were "exceedingly uncomfortable"

Okolo said the failures were due to age, however the parts were ordered and are now at the hospital. The COO said the hospital has installed temporary single AC units in the areas affected the most, however many portions of the facility have yet to be addressed.

Yesterday, JFL's Tropical Treats Cafe as well as some other departments within the hospital closed early, according to two JFL employees who requested anonymity to speak freely. Last week, *The Consortium* visited the Emergency Room and saw a loud, industrial fan conspicuously placed where patients come in to receive care.

Chairperson Kimberly Jones, who also doubles as the Kenneth Mapp administration's Communications Director, asked if the air conditioning problems had been completely resolved.

"The problem is fixed temporarily, it cannot be fixed permanently with the problem with have, because the problem we have is too old," Okolo said. Asked for the age of the units, Okolo told Jones they were as old as the hospital itself, but Jones corrected the COO, revealing to him that a new unit was installed in 1994.

And in relation to the JFL generators that failed during the recent WAPA [all-day power outage](#) that affected the entire island, Okolo said while one has been fixed, the second generator remains inoperable because a technician was needed to install the parts. Okolo said the hospital would have to hire someone from outside to do the repairs, however Jones said there were certified installers in the territory.

"I'm not concerned about the next board meeting," Jones said, responding to Okolo who promised to have an update on the installation by the next board meeting. "I'm concerned about the next power outage and the next emergency."

Okolo promised to make both the AC and generator issues top priorities.