

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Vialet Calls On DPNR To Fine WAPA For Brown, Contaminated Water In Light Of Impetigo Outbreak

Health / **Published On October 22, 2015 09:35 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **October 22, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- As the chair of the Committee on Health, Hospital and Human Services, and in response to Acting Commissioner of Health Juan Figueroa-Serville activating an island-wide public health alert on the recent outbreak of Impetigo here; Senator Kurt Vialet is calling on officials of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources to fine the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for what he says has been the ongoing problem of WAPA customers being the victims of brown, contaminated water that flows through their faucets.

The freshman Democrat also challenged the Department of Health to conduct surveys and collect pertinent data in relation to the potential effects of the contaminated water,

and how it may be affecting residents in neighborhoods and communities.

"WAPA's water in certain parts of the island comes out brown and residents can't use it," Mr. Violet told The Consortium in a brief phone interview this afternoon, adding that WAPA is well aware of the problem, but has yet to solve it.

Mr. Violet, a former principal at Arthur A. Richards Junior High School, said he had to install filters throughout the school's water system in order to get clean water.

"The house owner or the person living in the housing community should not be responsible for making sure that WAPA's systems transport clean water to their faucets," Mr. Violet contended. He said if officials at WAPA -- who haven't been successful in solving the problem -- can't find a solution, they should not be used.

"People have to be accountable in this community, Mr. Violet said. "We must stop making excuses. If a company can't do the job, get rid of it," he said. Ostensibly, Mr. Violet was not advocating that the government shutters WAPA; nor was he referring to a change of leadership at the semi-autonomous entity. Instead, Violet said there needs to be accountability at WAPA, as it's the only way results will be realized.

On Wednesday, Mr. Figueroa-Serville activated an island-wide public health alert here due to an Impetigo outbreak. According to a Government House release issued on the same day, DOH officials will be conducting investigations in areas where cases have been high.

Impetigo is a highly contagious skin infection that mainly affects infants and children and usually appears as red sores on the face, especially around a child's nose and mouth. The disease may clear on its own in two to three weeks, however, antibiotics can shorten the course of impetigo and help prevent the spread to others.

Keeping the skin clean is the best way to keep it healthy. Treat cuts, scrapes, insect bites and other wounds right away by washing the affected areas. If someone in your family already has impetigo, taking the following measures may help keep the infection from spreading:

- Gently wash the affected areas with mild soap and running water and then cover lightly with gauze.
- Wash an infected person's clothes, linens and towels every day and don't share them with anyone else in your family.
- Wear gloves when applying any antibiotic ointment and wash your hands thoroughly afterward.
- Cut an infected child's nails short to prevent damage from scratching.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Keep your child home until your doctor says he or she isn't contagious.

Senator Violet is urging the community to follow all the proper procedures for the impetigo outbreak, including isolating individuals that are affected, properly cleaning and sanitizing surfaces that touch people's bare skin each day, and any surface that could come into contact with uncovered infections.

Clarification: October 23, 2015

Sen. Kurt Vialet clarified his statement to The Consortium in a message late Thursday, stating that he has no issue with WAPA Chief Executive Hugo Hodge. Instead, he said there needs to be more accountability at the firm. The story has been updated.

© Viconsortium 2026