

The Virgin Islands Consortium

W.A.P.A. To Implement Extra Security Safeguards At Richmond Power Plant As Propane Conversion Goes Live On Tuesday

VIC News / **Published On April 02, 2016 09:30 AM /**

Staff **April 02, 2016**



ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority's conversion to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG or propane) as a primary source of fuel in the generation of electricity will achieve another major milestone on St. Croix next week. On the morning of Tuesday, April 5th, W.A.P.A. will for the first time introduce propane fuel to one of its retrofitted generating units as the conversion from fuel oil to propane continues to take shape. W.A.P.A. personnel and its contractor VITOL will oversee the introduction of propane to Unit 20 as the commissioning begins.

While this procedure is commonplace in the industry, W.A.P.A. is implementing several additional precautionary measures for security safeguards in and around the Estate Richmond Power Plant, to ensure that maximum safety standards are in place during this first phase of commissioning. Until W.A.P.A. has completed commissioning of the unit, barricades will be installed and traffic will be restricted in the area immediately surrounding the Richmond site. Motorists and pedestrians are asked to avoid the area. The water standpipe and the employee parking lot will remain accessible.

The commissioning of this unit on Tuesday follows work that began in 2013 with a contract signing between VITOL and W.A.P.A. Since that date, and [after delays](#), local and federal permits have been secured to fully develop LPG terminals at both power plants and the conversion of two units in each district to burn three fuel types: oil, propane and natural gas in the generation of electricity. Over the last few days, the terminal on St. Croix has been undergoing final preparations for Tuesday's first-time introduction of LPG to the power plant. It is expected that once this unit is fully commissioned on LPG, it will remain on line generating electricity for the residents and businesses of St. Croix.

Beginning on Sunday, the Mercaptan supply system will be made available as an additive to the propane feed into WAPA's facility. This process could likely result in a nuisance odor. Mercaptan is a harmless pungent-smelling gas which has been described as having the stench of rotting cabbages or smelly socks. It is a substance used to odorize gaseous substances which are odorless and colorless (such as propane and natural gas), for easier detection.

On Monday morning, a pre-commissioning meeting will take place with W.A.P.A., General Electric, IPOS and other stakeholders. At this meeting a punch-list of items will be created to ensure measures are checked off prior to the start-up of the unit.

Both VITEMA and the V.I. Fire Services (VIFS) are among local government stakeholders that have worked collaboratively with W.A.P.A. during the terminal development. According to WAPA's Chief Operating Officer Gregory Rhymer, the LPG project coordinator, "VITEMA and VIFS have been involved in the design and implementation phases of the terminal and have participated in training initiatives. Beginning last Thursday and expected to be completed this coming Monday, all 88 St. Croix firefighters would have participated in a training program focused on the W.A.P.A. Richmond Plant and Vitol's storage facility. This training allows the firefighters to become familiar with the fire protection systems and the emergency evacuation procedures at the power plant, in the event there is a need for outside firefighting assistance during an emergency."

The public should be aware that during the commissioning process, which will take place over the next several days, a series of alarm systems will be tested. Please don't be alarmed. In the event of an actual emergency, the public will be informed through normal means of notification: VI Alert, Facebook, website and local media.

During the commissioning process, a series of functional and other performance tests of the unit are necessary, to include service interruptions. These tests are used to evaluate the unit's reaction and response to forced outages or unanticipated drops in load, etc. If necessary, these service interruptions must take place during peak load times (preferably

early evening), but will be short-lived, because the power plant's spinning reserves will be on hand to recover the lost generation. The public will be advised of any required service interruptions.

On St. Thomas, marine work to include installation of fenders, breasting dolphins and other dock improvements to accommodate the propane shuttle vessels continues. Work on the landside will also include the installation of a marine loading arm, a device that connects the shuttle supply vessel to the LPG terminal at the Randolph Harley Power Plant in Krum Bay. The marine work now underway also includes the development of a permanent mooring for the very large gas carrier (VLGC). The mooring is located 5.7 nautical miles to the southwest of St. Thomas. "Just this week, the U.S. Coast Guard advised WAPA of its designation and approval of a temporary safety zone around the VLGC mooring location. WAPA anticipates the establishment of a permanent safety zone at this area in the near future once a final rule making process is completed. This area will be designated to facilitate the safe mooring of the VLGC and lightering activities associated with the shuttle supply vessels," said Rhymer. "It is anticipated that similar commissioning of generating units on St. Thomas will begin in August."