

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Response to Recent Outages in St. Thomas, WAPA Said It's Troubleshooting Generation Unit 23; New Generator to Be Added to Plant by End of June

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In response to a recent round of generation capacity challenges at the Randolph Harley Power Plant on St. Thomas, WAPA personnel have led a troubleshooting regimen toward resolving issues at the plant's largest generator, Unit 23, in an effort to resolve recent generation capacity challenges which led to outages Tuesday, the authority has announced.

In addition, and to sure-up the power plant, the utility will soon add more capacity when Unit 27 returns to service later this month, WAPA said Thursday.

WAPA explained that over the past few weeks, the Harley power plant has been dispatching all its capacity to satisfy electrical demand, with little to no reserve or back-up options. As a result, when a unit malfunctions or is taken out of service for repair and maintenance, there is not enough generation capacity to meet the electrical demand of the utility's customers. Peak demand in the St. Thomas - St. John district is approximately 47 megawatts, the authority said.

In recent weeks, Unit 23 has experienced operational challenges including some fuel system irregularities. When Unit 23 is unavailable, the plant is approximately three megawatts short of the required generation resulting in outages to customers, WAPA explained. To return the unit to reliable service, all fuel and hydraulic systems are being systematically reviewed. WAPA will be conducting this review and testing over the next few days.

Additionally, WAPA recently issued a notice to proceed to General Electric. The company will finalize the return of Unit 27 to service. The unit, a 26-megawatt generator, was one of three previously rented from APR Energy. WAPA is now renting Unit 27 from its manufacturer and owner, General Electric. The availability of an additional 26 megawatts of generation will provide stability to the power plant and more options for service restoration following outages.

WAPA said it expects Unit 27 to be online within the next two weeks or at the latest, by the end of June. Additionally, by the end of this year, the unit will be retrofitted to burn the lower cost, more efficient LPG fuel to generate electricity.