

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Residents May Experience Sporadic Power Outages As WAPA Tests Propane Conversion System

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ST. CROIX -- 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 continue next week and residents may experience intermittent service interruptions during this phase of testing, WAPA announced this afternoon.

WAPA Executive Director Julio Rhymer, Sr. said over the weekend that beginning on Tuesday, October 4, residents may experience short-lived service interruptions as technicians carry out a series of power rejection tests.

"These tests are used to evaluate the unit's reaction and response to forced outages or unanticipated drops in load. For the last week and a half, plant personnel along with technical staff from General Electric and VITOL have been testing generating Unit 20's ability to burn propane. All has gone well to date," Mr. Rhymer said.

Mr. Rhymer said technical staff are reviewing data generated each day as the unit burns propane. "They are fine tuning, analyzing data and increasing the load on the generator while it burns LPG to test its capabilities," he said. "Unit 20 is one of three generators at the Estate Richmond Power Plant that has been converted from oil as a sole fuel source to a tri-fuel operation. The other converted units are Units 16 and 17 and we should begin their testing shortly."

The recently appointed executive director said last week that at one point during the commissioning, Unit 20 was running 100% on propane producing as much as 20 megawatts of electrical power.

"Once the testing is completed, Unit 20 will continue to burn LPG to power St. Croix and technicians will shift the focus to commissioning the other units," he said.