

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA To Begin Introduction Of Propane At St. Thomas' Harley Power Plant As Migration To Propane Fuel Continues

WAPA / **Published On November 30, 2016 07:55 PM /**

Staff **November 30, 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 on St. Thomas is making steady progress, WAPA announced Wednesday.

A major step forward in the process will take place over the next few days when, for the first time, WAPA introduces propane to one of its retrofitted generating units. WAPA personnel, its contractor VITOL and General Electric, the unit's manufacturer, will oversee the introduction of propane to Unit 15, according to the release. Once work on

Unit 15 is completed, with the unit on line and powered by LPG, personnel will commission another 20-megawatt generator, Unit 18.

The two units are expected to provide approximately 60% of the power demand in the St. Thomas - St. John district through the use of the less-expensive and cleaner-burning LPG. In 2017, the third and largest generating unit on St. Thomas, Unit 23, will undergo both a major overhaul and fuel conversion. Next year, work will also be completed on the commissioning of a third unit for St. Croix, Unit 17.

The public is advised that during the commissioning process a series of alarm systems will be tested. These alarms are a part of the testing phase and should not be cause for concern. In the event of an actual emergency, the public will be informed through normal means of notification: VI Alert, Facebook, WAPA website and local media.

The commissioning process also calls for a series of performance tests of the unit that may include service interruptions. These tests are required to evaluate the unit's reaction and response to forced outages or unanticipated drops in load. Should service interruptions be required, they must take place during peak load times such as early evening, but will be short-lived. The power plant's spinning reserves will be available to recover the lost generation and the public will be advised of any required service interruptions.

While the commissioning procedure is routine in the industry, WAPA is implementing several additional precautionary measures for security safeguards in and around the Randolph Harley Power Plant to ensure that maximum safety standards are in place. Until the Authority has completed commissioning of the units, there will be limited access to the power plant. Similar safeguards were put in place earlier this year during the commissioning of generating units on St. Croix.

Both VITEMA and the Virgin Islands Fire Services (VIFS) are among local government stakeholders that have worked collaboratively with WAPA during the LPG terminal development. VITEMA and VIFS have been involved in the design and implementation phases of the terminals and have participated in training initiatives. Firefighters and other emergency first responders have all undergone training that has allowed them to become familiar with the fire protection systems, the general layout of the power plant as well as the emergency evacuation procedures in the event there is a need for outside assistance during an emergency.