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Capacity at Randolph Harley Power Plant Bolstered With Addition of Unit 27, WAPA Says

WAPA / **Published On July 03, 2020 06:52 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 03, 2020**

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The operational reliability and efficiency of the Randolph Harley Power Plant received a significant boost in recent days with the addition of 24 megawatts of generating capacity, the V.I. Water and Power Authority has announced.

“For the last week, Unit 27 has been added to the dispatch and the unit is working well in tandem with other WAPA-owned generators to meet the demand for electrical service in the St. Thomas – St. John district,” said John Woodson III, Harley plant superintendent.

According to the authority, Unit 27 was previously rented from APR Energy as part of a trio of units the company provided to meet generation needs of the district. WAPA is now leasing only one unit and directly from its owner and manufacturer, General Electric. Woodson explained that

the additional unit allows for better maintaining of all units as well as conducting both preventative and corrective maintenance without affecting the generation capacity needed to meet customer's demand for electrical service. "This creates a more reliable dispatch with better maintained units," he said.

"At the moment Unit 27 is burning oil to generate electricity and WAPA is working closely with GE on modifications to facilitate the use of propane fuel," said Clinton T. Hedrington Jr, chief operating officer of Electric Systems. "The unit will be more efficient on propane, and once the conversion is completed, the Harley plant will for the first time operate on 100% LPG." This has always been a WAPA milestone, to have both plants operating on LPG with oil as a back-up, WAPA said. The Estate Richmond Power Plant on St. Croix routinely operates on 100% propane. LPG is a cleaner burning and less costly fuel source.

Currently, Unit 27 is dispatched with other WAPA-owned Wartsila generators and Unit 15, a GE turbine, Hedrington said. "Adding Unit 27 gives us the flexibility of placing our most cost-effective generators online while having significant back up with oil burning units 14 and 23. With the added capacity, we can also plan more routine maintenance of the units."

"I thank Mr. Woodson and his team, COO Hedrington, our partners at GE, our governing board, and all who have worked tirelessly to successfully return Unit 27 to the Harley generation dispatch. This unit will serve us well, especially once on LPG, to bridge the gap until four new Wartsila propane-fired generators are delivered, installed, and commissioned in early 2022," said Executive Director Lawrence J. Kupfer.

According to WAPA, the four new units are presently on order. With seven Wartsila units online, our electric system team can begin to take a hard look at which of the older, less efficient generators can be decommissioned. "At that point, the Harley power plant will be operating in a most efficient state. An efficient plant leads to reliable generation, and lower operating costs which, for our customers, represents reduced rates," he added.