

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Apologizes To Waste Haulers For Long Wait On Payment. 'I'm Now Getting Fully Involved,' He Said.

Disaster Recovery / **Published On February 08, 2018 12:32 PM /**

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Governor Kenneth Mapp said on Wednesday that he would get personally involved in expediting the payment of waste hauling companies that haven't seen compensation since September.

"I apologize to the waste haulers that they haven't been paid, but some of your money is there, and more will be on the way. I'm going to work with Waste Management to get it expedited," the governor said.

On Tuesday, senators who make up the 32nd Legislature's Finance Committee [grilled officials](#) from the Waste Management Authority (W.M.A.) and the Dept. of Property and

Procurement (P&P) for answers on why it has taken so long to pay waste hauling companies that have been removing household waste (trash haulers) since last year's storms.

"Nonpayment for five months "would literally cause some small contractors to go bankrupt," said Senator Kurt Vialet. "Because they got to meet payroll, they got to meet everything else and they have not been paid yet."

"All the big fancy names, all the big contractors, these guys getting paid on time, on time!" said Senator Brian Smith, his voice peaking. "But our small guys — our small guys! — the guys them I represent, stopping me on the road all the time, running in front of my truck to cut me off, their eyes all bloodshot, and they're saying they ain't get paid in months!"

On Wednesday, the governor suggested that his personal involvement would speed up the process. "What I can say is that I'm now getting fully involved in that issue with the Waste Management Authority and the commissioner of Finance."

Mr. Mapp said he's working with FEMA in an attempt to release over \$16 million that was once obligated to a waste hauling company for work on St. John. The contract was terminated and the waste hauling company that had won the bid is no longer in the territory. "We wanted to apply some of those proceeds to waste haulers in St. Thomas and St. Croix," the governor said. But because the funds were designated for work on St. John, FEMA and the Mapp administration have been working together on relaxing the restrictions.

The governor pinned some blame for the delay of payment on W.M.A., stating that the authority's internal procedures needed to improve. "Recovery is tough, so I'm not knocking anybody down, but they [Waste Management Authority] got to step up their game a little bit on the inside. Meaning on the financial and administrative work so that their project worksheets with FEMA can be submitted, approved and acted on in a more timely way," Mr. Mapp said.

"I'm going to get involved with it with Waste Management like I did with the Water and Power Authority, like I'm doing now with Public Works and P&P and D.O.J. on the road project contracts," he said.

The governor said officials from W.M.A. would be visiting his office every week, "until we get them on track."