

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Restoration Of Electric Service To St. John Delayed Until Thursday Evening Following Transformer Fire At Substation

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ST. JOHN -- An early evening fire on Wednesday destroyed a power transformer at WAPA's electrical substation on St. John, the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has announced. The transformer, one of two such units at the facility, became engulfed in flames during a district-wide electrical service interruption that left St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island and Hassel Island without service for more than two and a half hours Wednesday afternoon, WAPA said.

The transformer fire will delay the restoration of electric service to St. John until at least Thursday evening, according to the utility. WAPA Executive Director Lawrence Kupfer said Wednesday night, the grounds of the substation must be deemed safe before WAPA personnel will be allowed to enter the substation, determine the impact of smoke that penetrated the building, make a thorough assessment of the facility and conduct any repairs.

“A considerable amount of time will be needed to inspect switchgear, bus bars and other equipment prior to reenergizing the facility which receives electrical service via an underwater cable from St. Thomas,” he said.

Once service has been restored to St. John, personnel will begin a root cause analysis of the burned transformer to determine what led to it catching fire at a time when electric service was interrupted, according to WAPA.

“Given the size of the transformer, it may be several weeks before we know for sure what caused the failure of the device and the subsequent fire,” Mr. Kupfer said.

WAPA apologized to residents on St. John for the inconvenience this prolonged service interruption will cause.

“I assure all of our customers on St. John that every effort will be made to restore service to the island’s two electrical feeders as quickly and as safely as possible,” Mr. Kupfer concluded.

Feature Image: Fire destroyed a power transformer at WAPA’s electrical substation on St. John (Credit: Chrystal Rozander, [via What's Going On, St. Thomas?](#))