

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Signs Memorandum of Understanding With New York State For Technical Assistance In Modernization Of Electric Grid

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The ongoing recovery effort by the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to restore, improve and modernize the islands' electric grid will receive a significant boost in the form of technical assistance from New York State, WAPA said in a release issued Friday. According to the authority, on January 4 WAPA entered into a memorandum of understanding with the New York Power Authority (NYPA) putting in place mechanisms for New York to provide technical consulting support for the continued rebuild of the WAPA grid.

WAPA said it's making investments in upgrading the generation, transmission and distribution systems to improve reliability, as well as incorporating a practical approach to alternative energy resources to help reduce the reliance on fossil fuels. Such energy resources include wind and solar.

WAPA CEO Lawrence J. Kupfer said Friday he is pleased that WAPA has entered into the relationship with NYPA which will greatly enhance our continuing efforts to modernize and rebuild the electrical system. "WAPA's request for technical assistance was facilitated through a long-standing partner, The American Public Power Association (APPA). The execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with NYPA will help WAPA in its continuing efforts to develop a world class electrical distribution system for our more than 55,000 customers," Mr. Kupfer said.

Officials at NYPA are eager to provide support to WAPA to assist in the ongoing development of a modern, resilient electric system, according to the release. "NYPA is standing ready to provide technical support for the rebuild and modernization of the U.S. Virgin Islands' electric grid," said Gil Quiniones, NYPA president and CEO. The mutual assistance process is an excellent, non-profit method to leverage the expertise of fellow utilities, he added.

Additionally, the American Public Power Association (APPA) is excited to see the agreement between WAPA and the New York Power Authority. "This is another example of the breadth and effectiveness of our national public power mutual aid network. We connect members to help not only in times of storm but also in times of calm so we can share lessons learned and be prepared for the next disaster," said Mike Hyland, APPA Senior Vice President, Engineering Services.

According to the release, WAPA and the APPA held a storm preparedness and resilience workshop last August on St. Thomas. The event, supported by a grant from the Department of Energy's Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security and Emergency Response, highlighted lessons learned and improvement opportunities in the wake of the 2017 hurricane season.