

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Signs Contract For Installation Of Standby Generators With Battery Storage On St. John

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The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority said Wednesday that it recently signed a \$ 2.7 million contract with Wartsila, LLC that begins the process of outfitting St. John with two standby four-megawatt generating units. The agreement secures WAPA a position in the Wartsila production line, and provides for engineering services for the two units, the authority said. In addition, the project includes up to two megawatts of battery storage.

WAPA said the recent contract signing is the initial phase of an overall turnkey project where the units slated for Coral Bay and Cruz Bay will be engineered, procured and constructed by Wartsila North America.

“One of the lessons learned from the 2017 hurricanes was the need to develop a means of providing standby power for St. John. It took 51 days for electrical service to be restored on St. John, and together with FEMA, WAPA began to develop a strategy to reduce the restoration time making St. John less dependent on St. Thomas for electrical service,” said Executive Director Lawrence J. Kupfer.

The authority also intends to enter into a contract with Wartsila for the overall procurement and construction of the units, according to the release.

“This is one of several mitigation projects WAPA has undertaken in the wake of the 2017 hurricanes. This project is designed to independently sustain the power demand of St. John while mitigating prolonged service interruptions due to weather-related or other catastrophic events,” Mr. Kupfer said.

WAPA said that at the present time, electricity required to meet the power demands of St. John is provided by way of a pair of submarine cables that originate on the east end of St. Thomas making St. John completely dependent on St. Thomas. Any major generation problem that interrupts service on St. Thomas leaves St. John without electrical service.

The Emergency Generation Hazard Mitigation Project for St. John is funded through FEMA on a 90-10 match. WAPA’s 10 percent match will be satisfied through the use of federal grant money provided by HUD.

WAPA said the project is a key component of its overall transformation plan, which will, 1) make the transmission and distribution systems more resilient through undergrounding of circuits, installation of composite poles, and hardening of electrical substations, 2) upgrade generating plants to reduce fuel consumption and improve reliability, and 3) incorporate more renewable generation, in the form of wind and solar with battery storage, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.