

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Says Composite Pole Broke Because Of Pressure From Fallen Tree

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WAPA spokesman John Greaux said a preliminary investigation was conducted into what caused a new composite material pole to fall on Centerline Road on St. John.

“The pole on Centerline was taken down by a large tree that came down on the primary service lines and toppled the pole,” Mr. Greaux said. “The pole did not structurally fail.” Mr. Greaux was responding to an inquiry by Governor Albert Bryan during Mr. Bryan's Friday update on Hurricane Dorian. The video was published on the Consortium's Facebook platform and has garnered more than 70,000 views as concerned residents questioned the veracity of the new poles.

The Water and Power Authority installed more than 1,000 of the new composite material poles since Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

WAPA planned to install approximately 2,800 of the poles on St. Croix, 2,200 on St. Thomas, 180 on Water Island, and 1,100 on St. John.

Composite poles are supposed to withstand higher wind-speeds and be more resilient than the traditional wooden poles. WAPA said those being installed across the territory are supposed to withstand winds of up to 200 miles per hour.

Installing the poles on St. John - where the pole collapsed Wednesday — was expected to cost approximately \$63 million.

Mr. Greaux sought on Saturday to assure residents that the poles was damaged by debris and did not fail on its own.

“It was that impact (by a falling tree), wind, the weight of the tree, plus the weight of the line brought it down,” he said.

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