

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas WAPA Customers May Experience 'Momentary Service Interruptions' Beginning Tonight During Testing Of Unit At Harley Power Plant

VIC News / **Published On October 15, 2019 08:40 PM /**

Staff **October 15, 2019**



ST. THOMAS -- For three nights this week, beginning at midnight Tonight, personnel at the Randolph Harley Power Plant will carry out performance testing on Unit 23 before the unit is certified to return to service, WAPA has announced.

"The performance testing will cap a major maintenance overhaul that the unit has undergone. Originally slated to return to service in September 2017, the unit's return was significantly delayed by the effects of Hurricane Harvey on Texas, and Hurricanes Irma and Maria on the Virgin Islands," said Clinton T. Hedrington, Jr., chief operating officer of

electric system.

Mr. Hedrington noted that WAPA's contractor, Sulzer Turbo Services, is based in Texas where Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017. "Harvey and the effect of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Virgin Islands posed significant delays in shipping major components of the unit between Texas and the Virgin Islands as was required for the maintenance regimen. The contractor, and WAPA personnel, led by Plant Superintendent John H. Woodson III, have worked diligently to ensure the work was completed, and that the unit would once again become available for generation dispatch," he said.

Beginning on tonight at midnight, and continuing through 6 a.m., personnel will test the unit's performance, its ability to be added to the generation dispatch, and gauge the unit's performance under load. Unit 23 is a 39-megawatt General Electric generator owned by WAPA which was first came into service in 2004. The performance testing is also scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday nights this week.

"During the testing, residents may experience momentary service interruptions, but we assure our customers that we have taken proactive measures to ensure than any outages that do occur, are short-lived," Mr. Hedrington said.

According to WAPA, the plans for Unit 23 once the overhaul work has been accepted by WAPA is to have it available as a stand-by generator. "While we expect that coming out of the maintenance regimen, the unit will be quite efficient, its operating efficiency is not quite on par with the smaller, new propane-fired Wartsila units. We will continue to use the Wartsila units and either another propane-fired generator, Unit 15, in the daily generation dispatch, or a combination of Wartsila units and some of the rental generators, Units 25, 26 and 27," Mr. Hedrington explained.

The availability of Unit 23 adds a level of reinforcement to the available generation at the Harley plant in the event of power generation loss, WAPA said.

At the moment, Unit 23 is designed to only burn No. 2 oil in the generation of electricity. "Once it has passed all performance testing, and we are satisfied with its performance, we will take a closer look at whether it is feasible and financially prudent to convert it to burn LPG as well as diesel," Mr. Hedrington added. He said WAPA's plan is to continue utilizing propane as the primary fuel source. "It is a lower cost fuel and is cleaner burning. The use of LPG translates into significant fuel savings for WAPA which eventually translates to lower costs for our customers."

WAPA said it has issued a Request for Proposals for an additional 40 megawatts of generation capacity at the Harley power plant. The additional units will be funded by a federal grant as part of the disaster recovery and mitigation from the 2017 hurricanes.