

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas and St. John Went Dark Because WAPA Resorted to Generating Unit Known to be Unreliable Source of Power

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The multiple power outages that struck almost all of St. Thomas and St. John over the past two days was because WAPA resorted to using a rental generating unit known to be an unreliable source of power.

“The performance of Unit 26, a 25-megawatt rental unit, has been questionable, and the unit has not been used by WAPA to satisfy electrical demand until the last few days,” said Water and Power Authority spokesman Jean Greaux in a written statement Monday night.

Some modifications had recently been made to the Unit 26 fuel pressure systems, and its performance had generally improved, Mr. Greaux said.

But not enough.

“WAPA options were limited over the past few days, and we could not avoid dispatching Unit 26 given that another rental, Unit 25, was on a scheduled maintenance, and two WAPA-owned gas turbines, Units 15 and 23, were not available,” said Chief Operating Officer of Electric Systems Clinton T. Hedrington, Jr.

He said repairs to Unit 15’s fuel systems were completed Monday, and the unit was dispatched to assist in the restoration from a second outage this evening. Unit 23 is awaiting a component for its starting system, the part is on order, and should be on-island this week.

“Units 14 and 15 were used tonight to begin the restoration of service, we anticipate having Unit 25 back from its scheduled maintenance by midday Tuesday which will add a significant layer of reliability and stability to the Harley plant,” he said.

Executive Director Lawrence J. Kupfer apologized to the community for the inconvenience caused by the outages of Sunday and Monday.

“... Over the last few days, however, without some of the other units, we had few options other than to add Unit 26 to the dispatch, and unfortunately, its performance indicates there is more work to be done on it. “