

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Residents Say They Have Been Without Reliable Pipe-Borne Water Since May

Mars Hill/Wheel of Fortune residents say chronic low pressure has worsened into months without reliable pipe-borne water, leaving some elderly neighbors scrambling for alternatives while WAPA bills continue. The utility has now been asked to respond.

WAPA / **Published On September 11, 2026 06:10 AM /**

Janeke Simon **September 11, 2026**



Residents of the Mars Hill/Wheel of Fortune area say they have endured months without reliable pipe-borne water, describing a chronic problem that has persisted for years but has become particularly severe in 2026.

“Every year we have a situation with pressure, or no water at all,” said Arlene Coggins-John, who contacted Consortium journalists after what she described as an unsatisfactory response from the V.I. Water and Power Authority. “This year has been the worst thus far; we haven’t had water in this area from May of this year, and we’re now in September.”

Ms. Coggins-John said the problem is not simply reduced pressure. “When I say no water, sometimes it comes out as a drip, and then in a few seconds there’s no water at all,” she said. “You can’t even wash your pinky toe with it.” Despite the lack of reliable service, she said residents continue receiving water bills.

According to Ms. Coggins-John, WAPA has recently attributed the problem to leaks along its distribution network as well as drought conditions that have strained water production. She said, however, that residents of the elevated community have dealt with inadequate pressure for years. “Five years we have been dealing with it, and even during the course of the year when we have water, the water pressure is so low. You have water, but the water pressure is so low, there’s not much you could do with it,” she said.

While Ms. Coggins-John’s home has a cistern, she said several of her neighbors have no cistern or storage tank and therefore have fewer options when pipe-borne water is unavailable. “About four people in my area don’t have a cistern or tank,” she said, adding that one neighbor recently purchased a storage tank. “But guess what? She still receives the bills.” Ms. Coggins-John estimates that at least 20 residents in the area are affected by the recurring water problem.

She expressed particular concern for older residents who may not be physically able to carry water or easily arrange alternative supplies. “We have a lot of elderly people living in this area, who can’t go and lift buckets of water... it’s a mess.” With emergency water distribution in Frederiksted [ending this week](#), residents who remain without reliable service will have to secure water through other means.

Ms. Coggins-John also criticized what she described as poor communication within WAPA, saying some customer-facing employees appeared unaware of the extent of the water problem in Frederiksted. “I called the billing department, and...I got to understand that they didn’t even know that Frederiksted had a water issue. So the problem is a lack of communication with the upper level management. They’re not sending emails, and I was told this by several of the office staff....they said, in all actuality, they never know what’s going on out in the street.”

She said greater accountability should begin with WAPA publicly acknowledging the longstanding problem and improving communication both internally and with affected customers. “The first thing that they need to do is acknowledge they have a situation and communicate with the public and communicate with the billing department, communicate with the lower-level employees, and then you can go from there.”

The Consortium has contacted WAPA for comment on the concerns raised by residents and will update the story when a response is received.