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## WAPA Says Efforts to Restore Hours-Long Power Outage in St. Thomas-St. John District Was Complicated by Heavy Rainfall

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WAPA said Tuesday afternoon that an electrical service interruption which affected customers in the St. Thomas - St. John district Tuesday morning resulted from the loss of an electrical substation which later cascaded into several generating units tripping offline at the Randolph Harley power plant.

“Shortly after 7 a.m., apparent equipment failure at the hurricane-damaged Donald Francois Electrical Substation tripped the facility and led to equipment associated with the operation of our largest generator, Unit 23, becoming de-energized. The unit subsequently tripped. Initially, five electrical feeders served by the substation fell offline, and when Unit 23 tripped, it affected six other feeders,” said Clinton Hedrington, Jr., chief operating officer of electric system at the

authority.

While plant personnel worked to restore generation capacity, other units tripped. “As efforts continued to regain capacity, it became clear we needed to take down all units and restart. We began the restoration of service with one of our lesser-used, smaller generators, and slowly rebuilt plant capacity while restoring service to our customers,” he added.

According to the release, the restoration was further complicated by the need for Line Department personnel to brave deteriorating weather conditions and execute a grid reconfiguration. The grid changes were required to bypass the substation and achieve full-service restoration to all customers. Apart from small portions of a couple feeders, service was restored to customers around midday. A mixture of propane-fired and oil-based generating units were dispatched to satisfy the demand for electrical service in the district.

The Francois electrical substation, located between the Lucinda Millin Home for the Aged and the PMP housing community in Long Bay, was damaged in the 2017 hurricanes and has remained in an operating state through a series of temporary repairs, WAPA said. Named for long-time WAPA engineer and governing board member Donald Francois, the substation is on a list of WAPA facilities slated to be restored and upgraded using federal funding provided by FEMA. Until the facility fully refurbished, WAPA personnel will continue to make repairs as necessary to maintain its functionality.