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FEMA Awards WAPA $113 Million to Continue Electrical System Upgrades on St. John

Disaster Recovery / **Published On January 22, 2021 04:23 PM /**

Staff Consortium January 22, 2021

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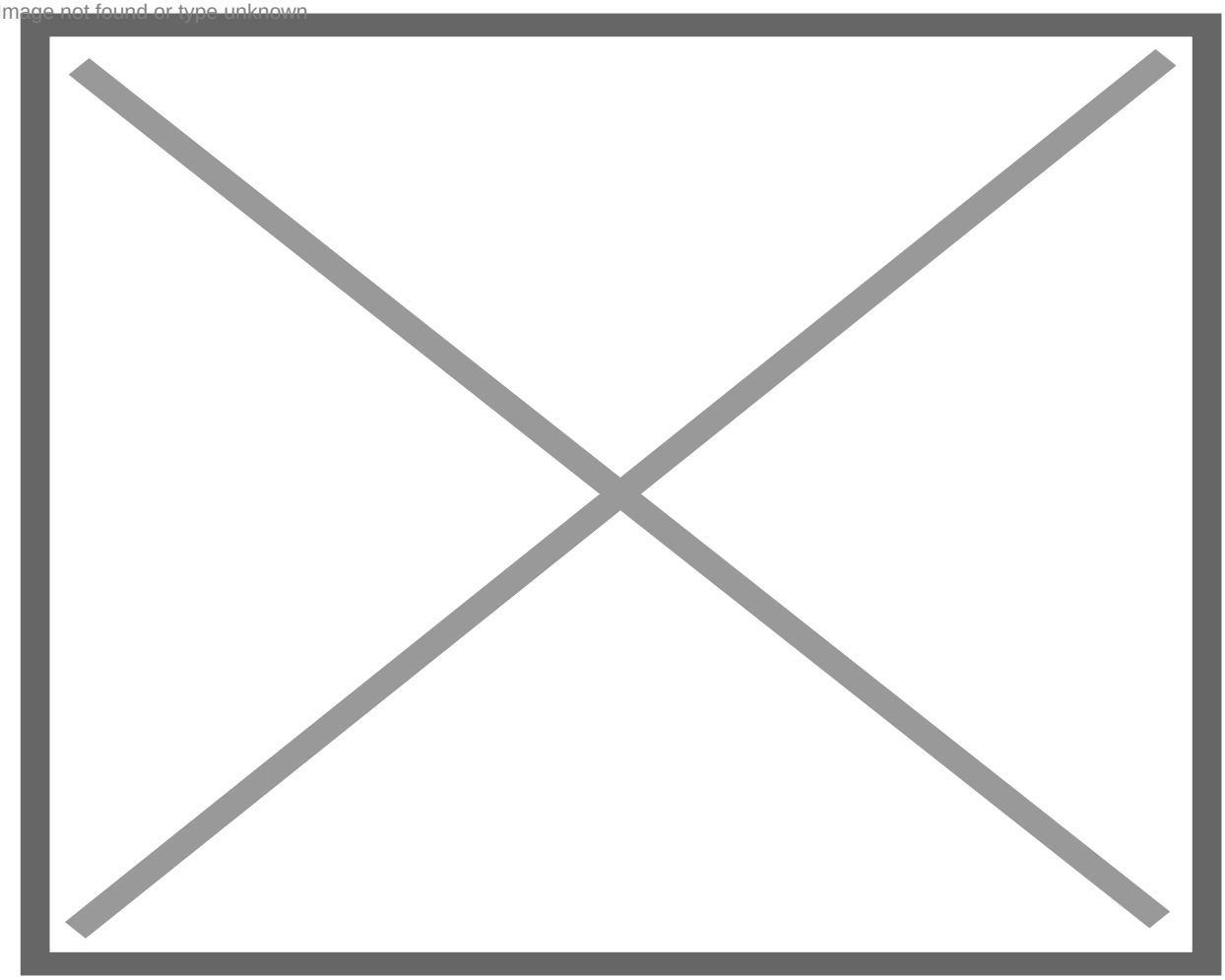

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority said Friday it has been awarded more than $113 million for the continued installation of composite utility poles on St. John and the undergrounding of electrical equipment in St. John.

The funding, approved on Friday, is the latest obligation of FEMA monies to WAPA to execute a myriad of mitigation projects that are aimed at building a more reliable, efficient, and resilient electrical system in the territory, WAPA said.

“Today’s approval of $113,409,904.55 by FEMA follows on WAPA’s continued justification of projects to modernize and rehabilitate not only the power plants but the electric grids comprised of both transmission and distribution components. We are grateful to our partners at FEMA and

HUD, the leadership of Governor Albert Bryan Jr and the Office of Disaster Recovery for the continued support they have provided to WAPA in securing funding for the three to five year transformation of the utility," said WAPA Executive Director / CEO Lawrence J. Kupfer.

"This award marks another critical milestone in our recovery and our efforts to support WAPA's ongoing transformation and plans to bring energy independence to St. Johnians," Governor Bryan said.

"FEMA's commitment to the recovery of St. John and all of the U.S. Virgin Islands remains steadfast. Today's announcement is the next step in our partnership with Governor Bryan, WAPA, and ODR to rebuild the electrical infrastructure on this beautiful island. We look forward to continued collaboration with our federal and territorial partners in moving the island's recovery forward," said FEMA U.S. Virgin Islands Acting Recovery Director John Covell.

"This important grant will benefit the Virgin Islands tremendously in our ongoing rebuilding efforts. The United States government and the international community has an obligation to work with the affected local governments to restore infrastructure, provide critical humanitarian assistance, and help rebuild our islands," said Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, whose office also announced the grant today.

"The Office of Disaster Recovery commends the continued efforts of our local and federal partners, as we aim to build a more resilient and dependable power grid that can withstand future weather events," said O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Willams-Octalien. "The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority has been awarded just over $1B of the $5B obligated to the territory to cover both emergency and permanent work in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria."

Mr. Kupfer said the funding announced today by FEMA is specific to projects on St. John. "We will continue to install composite poles in the areas where it is impossible to underground while undergrounding significant portions of our electrical equipment," he said.

According to WAPA, in a few weeks, ground will be broken on St. John for the first phase of the undergrounding of Feeder 7E, beginning at the existing substation and continuing towards downtown Cruz Bay. "Plans for the project have been approved, permits are in place, and a notice to proceed was issued recently to the contractor," Mr. Kupfer said.

To date, 966 composite poles have been installed on St. John representing about 49% of the pole project on the island. Plans call for the installation of 1,960 composite poles on St. John, said the authority.

Key components of the authority's transformation plan include poles that can better withstand windstorms, undergrounding of electrical equipment, addition of more solar and wind renewables to the grid, addition of new generation at power plants on St. Thomas and St. Croix, and the development of micro electric grids with battery systems. In addition, St. John is also slated to receive two standby power generators that will restore service to customers on the island when generation challenges affect the St. Thomas power plant. The standby generators are now in the design stages.

In the aftermath of the 2017 hurricanes, more than 90 percent of the electric system on St. John was destroyed. Electrical service was restored to the island some 51 days after Hurricane Irma's landfall.