

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Says Loss of Fuel Pressure Caused District-Wide Power Outage in STT-STJ Thursday; Interruption Led to Delay in Start of School

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Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Water and Power Authority on Thursday said a preliminary review of data from four of its generating units points to a loss of or significant drop in fuel pressure at the time of an electrical service interruption in the St. Thomas - St. John district early Thursday morning. The interruption led to a delay to the start of school in the district, according to the Dept. of Education. D.O.E. said its headquarters in downtown Charlotte

Amalie and the Curriculum Center at Edith Williams Alternative Academy were also affected.

“Personnel have reviewed data files from Unit 15 as well as three Wartsila generators and have noted a significant fuel pressure drop which tripped the units and resulted in the major power outage,” said Noel Hodge, WAPA interim executive director. Customers on St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island and Hassel Island were affected.

According to the release, Mr. Hodge said management and operations teams at the Randolph Harley Power Plant are working through the issues that led to the fuel pressure drop. “We want to fully understand the circumstances that contributed to the pressure loss, and more importantly, how a reoccurrence can be avoided,” Mr. Hodge said. He said the dispatched propane-powered units were operating normally and the pressure loss “essentially fuel-starved the units leading to their tripping offline. It was a sudden loss of all generation.”

Prior to today’s outage, which occurred at approximately 3 a.m., the plant had not experienced a district-wide outage since January 11, WAPA said.

Approximately 30 minutes after all customers were restored, at about 5:40 a.m., two of the three dispatched generators tripped, resulting in an outage to customers on six feeders across the St. Thomas - St. John district. After resolving operational issues with the tripped units, plant personnel rebuilt generation capacity and restored service to all customers at approximately 7:55 a.m.