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Pole Fire Destroys Circuits Linked to Two Feeders, Resulting in District-Wide Power Outage in St. Thomas and St. John

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A double-circuit pole snapped and toppled over Sunday night following a fire which destroyed equipment and contributed to a districtwide electrical service interruption.

ST. THOMAS — Electrical service was restored to all customers in the St. Thomas St. John district at approximately 9:00 p.m. Sunday following a districtwide service interruption, according to the V.I. Water and Power Authority.

The outage resulted from a pole fire which destroyed circuits associated with two electrical feeders, 7A and 8A, and sent an electrical surge back to the Randolph Harley Power Plant causing

dispatched generators to trip.

The fire on the double circuit pole in Subbase, just south of Nisky Shopping Center and northwest of Gramboko Hill, tripped the two feeders at 6:52 p.m. Sunday and approximately ten minutes later, the subsequent power surge began affecting plant operations.



WAPA Line Supervisor Malvern Williams works on a pole in Subbase St. Thomas following a fire which destroyed circuits associated with two electrical feeders. The pole fire was the cause of a districtwide outage on Sunday, May 23, 2021. (Credit: The V.I. Water and Power Authority)

While power plant personnel restarted the generators and rebuilt production capacity, line department personnel worked on the field to isolate the burned pole, which eventually snapped and toppled over. The isolation was required to reconfigure portions of the electric grid and enable restoration of all customers on Feeders 7A and 8A Sunday night. Restoration of electrical service to customers began at 7:55 p.m.

Electric system crews will return to the site of the burned double circuit Monday to determine what factors may have contributed to the fire and begin the process of planting a new pole, replacing equipment and restoring the circuits of both feeders. Once completed, the electric grid will be returned to its normal configuration. The restoration work is not expected to affect electrical service to customers.

Firefighters from the V.I. Fire Services assisted WAPA in extinguishing the pole fire last night.

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