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V.I. Energy Office, WAPA and DPNR Looking to Address Monthslong Permitting Process for Net Energy Billing Program

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The V.I. Energy Office and the V.I. Water and Power Authority said Wednesday they have identified that many Net Energy Billing Program applications have not been able to navigate the permitting process to completion despite multiple months of processing. Additionally, it is clear that a significant amount of installations by installers/electricians who are not certified within the Energy Office program have continued to persist throughout the territory, WAPA and the Energy Office said.

Recognizing these challenges, WAPA, the Energy Office and the Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources said they have collaborated to "creatively address the issue."

Beginning immediately, Net Energy Billing applications will require a certifying letter and installation checklist from the licensed electrician associated with the project, the government agencies said. Relative to the permitting workflow, the submission of the certifying letter and installation checklist will replace the following steps: DPNR Electrical Plan Review, the DPNR Electrical Inspection, and DPNR Final Electrical Inspection, according to the release.

The goal of accepting the certifying letter and installation checklist is to expedite the DPNR approval process and ensure that applications will efficiently navigate the permit process to completion, stated the release. The certifying letter and Installation Checklist must be signed and stamped by the licensed electrician associated with the project and uploaded to the project within the Net Energy Billing Portal or submitted within the Virgin Islands Energy Office. The template for the certifying letter and checklist will be provided by the VIEO and made available for at the VIEO's office and/or download on its website energy.vi.gov.

The use of the certifying letter and installation checklist will function similarly to the “Electrical Certifications for Power Connections” that was implemented following the 2017 storms to ensure timely reconnection of weather heads throughout the community. The waiver of the DPNR Electrical Plan Review, the DPNR Electrical Inspection, and DPNR Final Electrical Inspection is a special consideration that has been granted to the Virgin Islands community, stated the release. As a result, participation is required from all non-registered grid interconnected Solar and Solar plus Storage installations throughout the territory, the release emphasized. Strict enforcement protocols will be implemented for intentional non-compliance.

"This joint communication serves to remind unregistered distributed energy stakeholders that the Net Energy Billing program is not a voluntary program," stated the release. "We expect all currently installed, non-Net Meter, and future grid-connected distributed energy installations to be registered within the program."

The V.I. Energy Office said it is in the process of scheduling in-office walk-throughs of the online permitting portal, and invites installers, electricians, and property owners to call 340-713- 8436 to schedule an appointment on St. Croix and St. Thomas.