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Root Cause of Major Power Outage in St. Thomas-St. John District Won't Be Known For Days, WAPA Says

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In a release issued Friday night, the V.I. Water and Power Authority said the cause of a major power outage in the St. Thomas-St. John District that last for 12 hours beginning Thursday night, won't be known for a number of days until a full investigation has taken place.

The authority said electric service was restored to all customers in the St. Thomas–St. John district at approximately 11:20 a.m. on Friday. WAPA said while it will take a few days to fully determine and understand the cause of the outage, authority officials suspect that a large generating unit tripped and affected the functionality of three smaller units which resulted in a districtwide outage impacting service to all customers on St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island and Hassel Island, according to the release.

At the Randolph Harley Power Plant Friday morning, Interim Executive Director / CEO Noel Hodge said electric system personnel have already begun to review data logs of the units dispatched at the time of the outage to pinpoint exactly what went wrong. "It is part of our established protocols to identify the root cause of the outage, better understand what caused the interruption and how we can avoid a future reoccurrence," he said.

Plant personnel worked all night Thursday and well into Friday morning to overcome operational challenges with several generating units. "Our goal was to get at least two units at full capacity to restore service to the affected customers," Hodge said. He said several WAPA power production employees from the Estate Richmond Power Plant on St. Croix were flown to St. Thomas this morning to assist with the recovery of the power plant. "Personnel faced a myriad of issues as they attempted to rebuild generation capacity at the power plant. It was after 9 a.m. Friday when Units 14 and 23 were successfully brought online to restore service."

Hodge said he does not anticipate any other associated outages resulting from the service interruption. At midday Friday, WAPA's largest generator, Unit 23, its three propane-fired smaller generators and two other units, 14 and 27, were dispatched to meet the power demand of customers in the district.

The interim CEO also apologized to all customers who endured the inconvenience caused by the near 12-hour service interruption and thanked the men and women of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority who worked tirelessly to overcome the operational issues which prolonged the outage and delayed service restoration.

"We thank the public for its understanding and I thank my employees at team WAPA, some who had been on the job for almost 30 hours, for their untiring efforts and dedication in getting electrical service restored to our customers," he said.