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Public Works Orders Liberty to Halt Undergrounding Work, Citing 'Inadequate Striping' and 'Egregious Actions'

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The Department of Public Works has issued a stop-work order, effective immediately, on the current undergrounding project being performed on Liberty Communications USVI behalf by Bermudez, Longo, Diaz-Masso, LLC, the department announced Tuesday.

D.P.W. said Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel wrote a letter addressed to Liberty Communications Puerto Rico CEO Naji Khoury, stating that over the past two weekends, D.P.W. "has been inundated by several reports of unsatisfactory and unsafe work in both the St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John districts."

Most notably are the inadequate striping, performed by Lineas de Puerto Rico, Inc., in Christiansted on St. Croix, and unsafe driving conditions, mostly in the westbound lane of Route 33 between the Four Corners intersection and the Estate Hope/Pearl intersection, D.P.W. said.

“My priority will always be the safety of our public transportation infrastructure,” stated Mr. Gabriel. “These most recent, egregious actions demonstrate to me that Liberty, its contractors and subcontractors have no consideration or corporate responsibility for the public transportation infrastructure.”

Mr. Gabriel said D.P.W. has made "every effort to coordinate with the contractors on this project regarding the department's expectations of traffic control and safety measures," however, "there still seems to be a clear divide between the two parties."

"At this time, I believe the prudent thing to do is to stop all work on this project for the safety of our residents. Before we allow for the contractors to re-start operations, we need assurances that this kind of irresponsible work will not happen again," the Public Works commissioner added.

The department said the stop-work order will only allow for necessary emergency repairs to improve the road conditions referenced above.