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Resumption of Undergrounding Work by Liberty Communications USVI Announced After Weeklong Stop-Work Order

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The Department of Public Works on Friday announced the resumption of undergrounding construction by Liberty Communications USVI, which has hired Bermudez Longo, Diaz-Masso LLC (BLDM) to perform the territory-wide work.

A stop-work order was [issued last week](#); at the time, D.P.W. said it was "inundated by several reports of unsatisfactory and unsafe work in both the St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John districts."

In a release issued Friday, the department said Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel and DPW staff met several times with Liberty Communications of Puerto CEO Naji Khoury, his staff and BLDM representatives.

The outcome of those meetings, according to D.P.W., include the following:

- A revised communications plan - including additional print, radio and web media, for more consistent communication with the community regarding this project.
- A revised Maintenance of Traffic (MOT), as well as Health and Occupational Safety Plans from BLDM, LLC. This will also include sworn statements from all contractors and subcontractors that they will strictly abide by these plans.
- Dedicated Health and Safety Officers for both districts. These officers will have the added responsibility of providing daily reports to the assigned DPW Project Manager.

"Noting the above, effective, Friday, July 16, 2021, Liberty Communications USVI and its contractors are authorized to resume work on Phase 1 of the undergrounding project in both the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix districts," Public Works said in a release.

Mr. Gabriel stated, "My priority has always been ensuring safe roadways for our pedestrian and vehicular traffic. I believe Liberty and its subcontractors understand the importance of executing their work safely and timely. With the assurances we received over the last week, I believe we are in a good place to allow for the project to restart."

In his letter addressed to Mr. Khoury, Mr. Gabriel thanked him for his collaboration and responsiveness on this important issue. He also said he would issue a permanent stop order on the project if further violations continue, according to D.P.W.

Phase 1 of the undergrounding project is expected to be completed within 45 days, according to D.P.W. A meeting has been set for later this month to discuss and set expectations for the second phase of the project.

In a statement issued July 9, Mr. Khoury said, "First of all, we regret this incident, and we apologize for the issues it may have caused. We take our responsibility very seriously and pride ourselves in our work. The situation on Crown Mountain Road, Route 33 on the island of St. Thomas was corrected on Tuesday, July 6. We remain focused on completing all our work to ensure the USVI mobile network's strength and redundancy, with the utmost care in the construction process."

He concluded, "We are committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that the work is completed correctly and safely. We are looking forward to continue providing the people of the USVI with a first-rate mobile experience."