

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Water Production on St. Croix Continues to Hold Steady, Government Says

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The USVI Joint Information Center, organized to provide government-supplied information during times of disaster, announced Thursday that water production levels at the V.I. Water and Power Authority's water plant on St. Croix remained at normal levels on Wednesday.

The joint effort between the Government of the Virgin Islands and the Federal Emergency Management Agency is aimed at preventing the large influx of sargassum seaweed from disrupting normal water production on the island continues.

According to the release, the scope of the federal declaration is limited to actions taken by the federal government at the request of the territory to protect the offshore water intake operations in Estate Richmond, so it can continue operating at normal levels.

FEMA, experts from other federal agencies and the territory are working collaboratively to build contingency plans to prevent the Richmond Estate Desalination Plant from becoming impacted again. This includes discussion related to booming strategy, sargassum collection and removal while considering impacts to the environment.

Under the federal emergency declaration, actions taken by the federal government at the territory's request will be subject to a 75 percent federal and 25 percent territory cost share, the release stated. Governor Bryan had said the cost share would have been 90 percent from the federal government and 10 percent on the local side.

According to the release, Mr. Bryan continues to advise St. Croix residents and businesses to conserve water as they can.

Decaying Sargassum creates hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), which is a colorless gas with a strong odor of rotten eggs that can cause wide range of health effects, including irritation to the eyes and respiratory system. The effects depend on how much hydrogen sulfide a person breathes, the concentration of H₂S, how long the person breathes it and the person's general health. For more detailed information, visit the Department of Health webpage at doh.vi.gov.

The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs has clarified that while the current Sargassum State of Emergency is in effect Territory-wide, the price freeze currently in place for water products and services applies only to St. Croix.