

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Another WAPA Outage: All of St. Thomas and St. John Left Without Electricity For Hours

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Aerial shot of the Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas, USVI. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Water and Power Authority's failure to maintain a consistent flow of electricity to its ratepayers continues, with the latest customers affected being those in the St. Thomas-St. John District Wednesday afternoon.

According to the authority — which did not immediately provide an alert to the community, and whose alerts have been less forthcoming recently — multiple feeders were affected by a power interruption due to a loss of generation at the Randolph Harley

Power Plant. The power failure led to a district-wide outage that affected all of St. Thomas and St. John and resulted in thousands of customers unable to resume important activities.

The authority did not provide the time the outage took place in its update on Facebook, though we learned that the blackout occurred after 2:00 p.m. Wednesday.

Power was restored at about 4:19 p.m., according to WAPA.

A WAPA customer expressed frustration with the outages and blamed WAPA for destroying her home appliances. "So far it's come back twice to go back out. And my ceiling fan is fried water heater was fried last week," the customer wrote in a share on [WAPA's alert](#) of Wednesday's district-wide outage. "Virgin Islands Water & Power Authority has to do better. Sell those Teslas and buy parts so we can have continuous power and perhaps pay off all of your creditors."

Separately, the Consortium has been seeking comments from residents on their experience with WAPA's inconsistent billing practices, which many have criticized. Over 50 responses have been registered, and the publication will be following up with articles on the matter.

The USVI government has been seeking financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Energy to help take WAPA out of debt of nearly \$400 million, a significant portion of which is owed to Houston-based energy company Vitol. Governor Albert Bryan will be in Washington next week to lobby federal officials for the funding.

The two parties — WAPA and Vitol — have locked horns over the cost of the energy company's buyout of the extensive propane-fueled generation and storage infrastructure. Vitol says WAPA owes \$145 million, a sum WAPA CEO Andrew Smith said in August of last year would "increase the authority's debt by 60 percent, which is not feasible for the authority or the territory."