

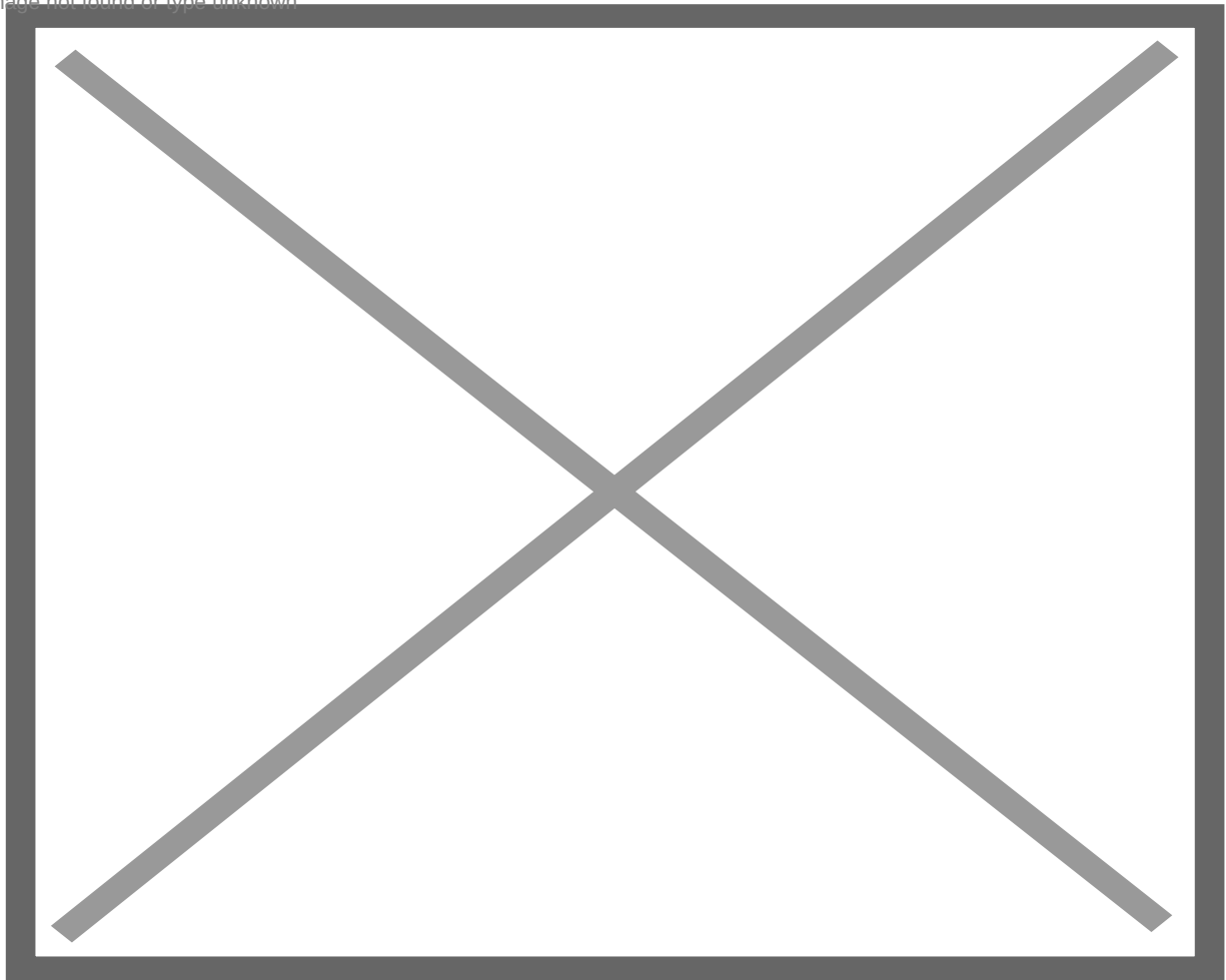
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# **\$1.76M Contract Approved by WAPA Board for Crucial East End Substation Rehabilitation; \$14.7 Agreement With Wartsila Gets Green Light**

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Janeke Simon **June 30, 2023**

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**The Randolph Harley Powerplant in St. Thomas, USVI on May 31, 2023. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM**

The Governing Board of the V.I. Water and Power Authority convened on Thursday to deliberate over key issues, chiefly the non-operational transformer at the East End Substation. This problem persists despite the extensive rehabilitation efforts following the devastation caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. Even after the installation of a 34.5 KV switchgear and a 13.2 KV distribution switchgear, the expected benefits from the second phase of the project remain unrealized, a disappointing reality attributed to the damaged transformer, revealed Chavanté Marsh, WAPA's Director of Project Management.

The project is an urgent one, Ms. Marsh argued, since it would take at least two years to get a new transformer online – years in which the East End and Tutu in St. Thomas substations will become less and less capable of handling the extra load. Even now, water intrusion from past hurricanes has damaged key components in the Donald Francois substation, leaving the facility unable to cope, she noted.

“One of the biggest risks we have right now is the current failing Donald Francois substation,” Ms. March said in response to a question from the board. She noted that the facility serves key portions of St. Thomas, including hospitals, downtown commercial area, and housing communities around schools on the island. As things stand, without the East End Substation functioning at full capacity, Ms. Marsh said that if the Donald Francois substation suffered a “major failure...we will have to basically rotate power indefinitely until we’re able to get either the transformer repaired or the substation rebuilt.”

Even outside of that catastrophic situation, current circumstances are very much less than ideal.

“The current configuration of the system results in longer outages and more customer interruptions, especially for this time of year” Ms. March said. Mitigation work at the Donald Francois facility cannot begin until the East End substation is operating normally, as that location will be needed to handle the load.

Ms. Marsh told the board that the federally-funded project to replace the transformer was recently given the green light from the Federal Emergency Management Authority. She noted that after a lengthy procurement process, local firm ABB Incorporated had emerged “as the sole vendor to move forward based on the overall quality of their bid and their proposed schedule.”

Marsh argued that “taking proper action is essential to restore the grid stability.” She then concluded by asking the board to approve the \$1,756,422 contract. The vote in favor was unanimous.

The WAPA board also approved an operation and maintenance agreement with Wartsila Caribbean Inc. in respect to the new generators at the Randolph Harley power plant. Plant Superintendent John Woodsen explained that “every aspect of the day-to-day operations and all of the related scheduled preventative maintenance, corrective maintenance, major maintenance, and administration of all tasks are included in the agreement.”

The three-year contract, with a 1-year extension option, with a total cost not to exceed \$14.7 million, was approved by the board.