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Unit 15 Fails Again as WAPA Says Rotational Outages Will Continue in St. Thomas-St. John

WAPA said rotational outages will continue across St. Thomas and St. John after Unit 15 tripped again and caused another districtwide interruption, while crews work to restore Unit 27 and manage mounting defects across the district's aging power system.

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The Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas, USVI. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The V.I. Water and Power Authority says rotational outages will continue across the St. Thomas-St. John district as crews work to restore generating capacity after another failure at Unit 15, while repairs to Unit 27 move forward as the utility's quickest path to stabilizing service.

In a statement issued Tuesday night, WAPA acknowledged the continued hardship caused by the outages and apologized for the disruption to homes, businesses, and essential services throughout the district.

At approximately 9:25 a.m., Unit 15 — which had been restored to service the previous afternoon — tripped again, causing the districtwide interruption experienced earlier in the morning. Plant personnel immediately began assessing the unit and identified additional mechanical defects as the cause, according to the authority.

WAPA said Unit 15 is already scheduled for replacement under the Prudent Replacement program, but crews will continue trying to keep it available until its replacement is placed in service. The authority also said a technical specialist from Texas will assist with ongoing diagnostics and repairs.

At the same time, WAPA said work to restore Unit 27 is progressing favorably and remains the fastest route to bringing more generating capacity back online. Replacement parts for Unit 27 are expected to arrive from Florida by Thursday so crews can begin accelerated repairs while work on Unit 15 continues.

Until enough generation is restored, the authority said rotational outages will remain necessary. WAPA said temporary outages are expected mainly during peak usage periods, beginning at about 9:30 a.m. and continuing through 11:30 p.m.

The authority said the current situation reflects the strain of operating an aging electrical system. WAPA said its legacy generators are decades old and now require increasingly complex repairs, while rising fuel, labor, and parts costs have compounded the challenge even as base rates have remained unchanged for years.

According to the authority, when fuel costs exceeded what was being recovered through the Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause, or LEAC, WAPA was forced to prioritize fuel purchases and defer some maintenance in order to keep power on for the community.

The utility also noted that its employees are experiencing the same hardships as the public. WAPA said that after long shifts restoring service, its plant operators, engineers, technicians, electricians, and linemen return to the same outages affecting their neighbors, families, and loved ones. That shared reality, the authority said, deepens the responsibility, urgency, and personal commitment its crews bring to the work each day.

WAPA said federal recovery and mitigation funding is helping to modernize and rebuild critical infrastructure, but replacing decades-old systems remains a broad and collaborative process involving local and federal partners.

In the meantime, the authority said every available resource — including local crews, off-island specialists, and incoming equipment — is being deployed in an effort to restore stable, reliable service as quickly as possible.

WAPA said it will continue providing updates as repairs progress and thanked the community for its support and resilience as the authority works through what it described as necessary repairs to strengthen the territory's power system in the shortest time possible.

