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WAPA Advances Emergency Generation Plan for St. Thomas-St. John After Unanimous Board Approval

WAPA said the emergency plan includes five Caterpillar units totaling 12.5 megawatts, with three already configured for direct grid integration and the overall deployment targeted for delivery and commissioning within approximately four to six months.

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A Caterpillar industrial generator unit similar to those WAPA says it plans to deploy as part of its emergency generation effort for the St. Thomas-St. John district.

The V.I. Water and Power Authority says it is moving forward with an emergency generation plan for the St. Thomas-St. John district after unanimous board approval, in an effort to strengthen near-term reliability and reduce the risk of extended outages on both islands.

The plan calls for the deployment of five Caterpillar generator units through partnerships with Wagner Power Systems and MacAllister Machinery Company, Inc., with WAPA targeting delivery and commissioning within approximately four to six months.

According to the authority, the emergency deployment strategy includes two 3.0 megawatt units, one 2.5 megawatt unit, and two 2.0 megawatt units. WAPA said the effort was developed in response to urgent system reliability needs in the district and is the result of coordination across its technical, operations, and procurement teams, along with local and federal partners.

A key advantage, WAPA said, is that three of the power generation engines are already configured for 13.8 kV operation, allowing them to be integrated directly into the grid without the need for step-up transformers. The authority said that feature will simplify installation and reduce field complexity.

The two 3.0 megawatt units, however, will require step-up transformers, which WAPA said are already being sourced. The authority noted that while standard industry lead times for similar equipment can stretch to 50 weeks, the team has prioritized an accelerated path to delivery and commissioning in about four to six months because of the need to restore and strengthen reliability in the district.

WAPA said teams are working to move the effort forward quickly and responsibly while aligning the project with system needs and customer impact. The authority also said the emergency generation plan will not interfere with the existing temporary generation project at the Randolph Harley Power Plant.

“We’re making steady progress on emergency generation because we understand the urgency of restoring reliability in the St. Thomas-St. John district,” said Karl Knight, chief executive officer and executive director of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority. “These units represent the most expeditious path to delivering emergency power to St. John while continuing ongoing efforts at the Randolph Harley Power Plant. If we lose generation on St. Thomas, these units can come online to provide power to our St. John customers.”