



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS NEWS RELEASE

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WAPA Reports on Progress, Sharing St. Croix Water Quality Update at Virtual Town Hall

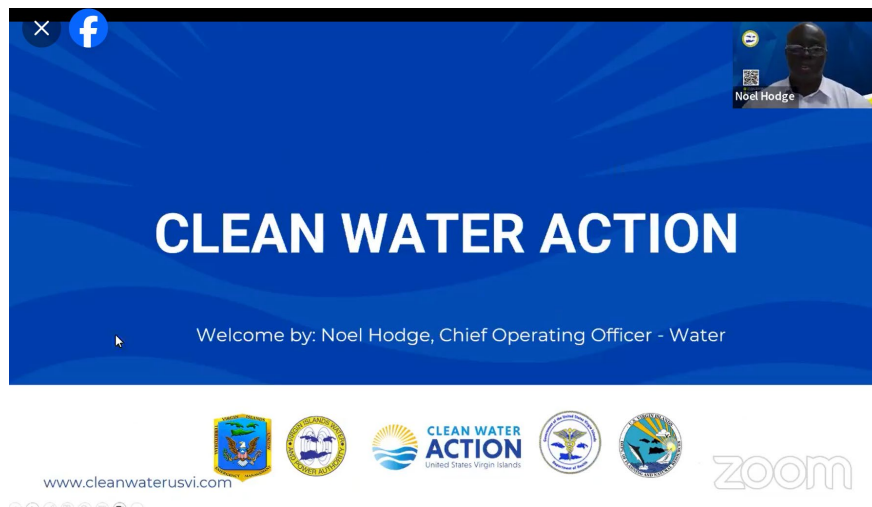


Image: Screenshot of Zoom on Facebook livestream of the Virtual Community Town Hall of Noel Hodge, COO-Water presenting to the community on Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

ST. CROIX, US VIRGIN ISLANDS --- The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” and “Authority”) hosted a second virtual town hall meeting last week Wednesday to update St. Croix residents about its progress in improving water quality on the island. The clear message of the meeting was that St. Croix does not have a water crisis as previously conducted tests may have suggested.

Sequential sampling in November by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) verified that 119 subsequential samples at household kitchen taps had lead levels far lower than those found at the distribution meters. Two of the samples showed above the lead action levels, likely from plumbing or faucets in homes. One sample above the action level had been taken from water that was stagnant for approximately four days.

While several audience members expressed lingering concerns, WAPA along with representatives of the EPA, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR),

Department of Health (DOH), and VITEMA were reassuring that concurrent measures are ongoing to test, collect data, and to continue to improve the quality of the water provided by the public water system. Currently, service line replacements in areas that contain brass or lead components, daily flushing of the system at water hydrants, distribution of water vouchers redeemable at local stores, and an active public education campaign are initiatives that WAPA has undertaken to date to address customer concerns.

With the results of further testing to confirm water quality, it is anticipated that the no drinking advisory issued late last year for St. Croix will be soon lifted by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. The state of emergency issued by the federal government will expire on January 23. While there have been no indications of lead or copper in the water systems on St. Thomas and St. John, sampling will continue on those islands also.

WAPA is also addressing concerns about red and brown water in several areas on St. Croix through its corrosion control program, expansion of the local laboratory team, additional flushing in targeted areas and ongoing consultation with national experts. With \$30M already obligated to WAPA, FEMA anticipates over \$1.5B in total for the prudent replacement of St. Croix's entire system to repair it to industry standards. FEMA representatives also attended the town hall.

Virgin Islands Department of Health (DOH) representatives also updated the community about its "Safe Haven" initiative with the goal of establishing a base line of lead exposure of the 0–6-year-old population, and the testing of other vulnerable community members. To date, the total number of children tested is 1,270.

The results confirmed Lead Negative: 66, Confirmed Copper Negative: 63, Confirmed Lead Positive: 3, Confirmed Copper Positive: 6, the remainder of the tests are pending confirmation. Home assessments were completed for the three positive lead cases. Lead was found in cooking pots and in floor tile. Additional in-home water testing is still pending.

The meeting can be viewed at on Facebook at <https://fb.watch/pKc2kdjLzS/> or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN31Cf1bBwvjPUTIbP7bilg>.

WAPA is also encouraging residents across St. Croix with active water accounts to sign up for free lead testing by emailing communications@viwapa.vi or calling 340-712-6673. Water vouchers are still available for active accounts in the impacted areas and will expire on February 19.

For details, eligibility and more information, please visit cleanwaterusvi.com.

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About WAPA: The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority is an autonomous agency of the Virgin Islands Government which produces and distributes electricity and drinking water to residential and commercial customers in the territory. WAPA was created by the Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1964 through Act No. 1248. Today, WAPA generates electrical power at production plants on St. Thomas and St. Croix and distributes electrical service through smart grids to customers on St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John, Hassel Island, and Water Island. Potable water is distributed to almost 13,000 customers through water lines and standpipes. WAPA also has the responsibility of installing and maintaining streetlights.