



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER & POWER AUTHORITY
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
NEWS RELEASE

(340) 774-3552 • communications@viwapa.vi / www.viwapa.vi

WAPA Expands Tree Pruning Initiative for Linemen in Collaboration with UVI CELL



Image: Errol Chichester, certified arborist, demonstrating tree pruning during workshop with WAPA linemen and safety personnel at the University of the Virgin Islands on the St. Croix campus.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS (October 11, 2024) – The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (“WAPA” or the “Authority”) has partnered with the University of the Virgin Islands' Center for Excellence in Leadership & Learning (UVI CELL) to launch a series of tree pruning workshops for WAPA linemen. On October 9 and 11, a total of 23 linemen and safety personnel participated in tree pruning workshops as part of a collaborative effort to equip WAPA’s team with essential skills on UVI’s St. Croix campus. These workshops are designed to enhance the expertise of linemen across the territory, including new members of the apprenticeship program.

This initiative builds on previous successful sessions with certified arborists, and WAPA is dedicated to expanding it to include lineworkers on St. Thomas and St. John in the coming weeks. The workshop covered essential topics such as, tree biology, tree pruning basics, pruning equipment, pruning mature trees, situations that require pruning, and making proper pruning cuts. In addition to classroom instruction, participants received hands-on training to practice proper tree pruning techniques, ensuring the long-term health of trees and reducing the growth of branches that often impact powerlines, causing outages.

Paul Gumbs, WAPA Line Supervisor on St. Croix, highlighted the dual importance of timely power restoration and environmental care: “We’re always focused on restoring power as quickly and safely as possible, but we understand that healthy trees are crucial to maintaining a healthy environment for all Virgin Islanders. It’s a balance we’re proud to maintain as part of our protocol for vegetation management.”

As part of this ongoing initiative, WAPA is also exploring more intensive training opportunities to further equip linemen with advanced skills in tree management, ensuring that they can meet the challenges of both powerline safety and environmental stewardship for years to come.

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Communication’s department is committed to reaching, informing, and connecting with the youngest members of the community to the eldest, through meaningful, transparent and effective communication.

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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.