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USVI JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

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Water Production on St. Croix Continues to Hold Steady

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Water production levels at the V.I. Water and Power Authority's water plant on St. Croix remained at normal levels on Wednesday as the joint effort between the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to prevent the large influx of Sargassum seaweed from disrupting normal water production on that island continues.

The scope of the federal declaration is limited to actions taken by the federal government at the request of the territory to protect the offshore water intake operations in Estate Richmond so it can continue operating at normal levels.

FEMA, experts from other federal agencies and the territory are working collaboratively to build contingency plans to prevent the Richmond Estate Desalination Plant from becoming impacted again. This includes discussion related to booming strategy, sargassum collection and removal while considering impacts to the environment.

Under the federal emergency declaration, actions taken by the federal government at the territory's request will be subject to a 75% federal and 25% territory cost share.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. continues to advise St. Croix residents and businesses to conserve water as they can.

Decaying Sargassum creates hydrogen sulfide (H_2S), which is a colorless gas with a strong odor of rotten eggs that can cause wide range of health effects, including irritation to the eyes and respiratory system. The effects depend on how much hydrogen sulfide a person breathes, the concentration of H_2S, how long the person breathes it and the person's general health. For more detailed information, visit the Department of Health webpage at doh.vi.gov.

The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs has clarified that while the current Sargassum State of Emergency is in effect Territory-wide, the price freeze currently in place for water products and services applies only to St. Croix.

For accurate and updated information regarding the WAPA water plant on St. Croix and the Sargassum State of Emergency, go to the Government of the Virgin Islands Joint Information Center at vi.gov/jic/.

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