V.I. to host regional water-wastewater conference

By ALDETH LEWIN
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ST. THOMAS — The V.I. Waste Management Authority and the V.I. Water and Power Authority have joined forces to host the 18th Annual Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association Conference and Exhibition, which will be held on St. Thomas next week.

The conference — which is open to everyone — will feature high level planning sessions, technical training workshops, forums, guest speakers, local facility tours and more than 50 exhibitors demonstrating advanced technologies and the latest scientific research in the water and wastewater industries.

V.I. Waste Management Executive Director May Adams said more than 300 water and waste professionals from the Caribbean, the U.S. mainland, Canada and Europe will gather at Marriott’s Frenchman’s Reef Beach Resort from Sunday to Friday to discuss water resources, wastewater and solid waste management.

“We hope to engage and build capacity for everyone in the Caribbean to provide services and exchange ideas,” Cornwall said.

Caribbean public utilities and policymakers will meet Sunday and Monday in a “high-level session” to network and share ideas on issues that affect island environments, Cornwall said. Those two days will also feature highly technical training sessions for association members.

On Monday night the exhibit hall will open and remain open until Thursday night. More than 50 exhibitors will show off their products, programs and demonstrate new technologies.

Tuesday through Thursday will be the main conference events including forums, panel discussions and networking opportunities. In addition to Virgin Islands presenters, professionals from Trinidad, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, the Cayman Islands, Virginia, Florida and Sweden will talk about issues including water shortages, safe drinking water, water use efficiency in the hotel sector, industry regulation, recycling, and environmental impacts associated with ensuring a green future for the Caribbean.

On “Student Day” Wednesday, 100 local high school students will attend a panel discussion and exhibition tour to encourage interest in future careers in these areas.

Technical tours to WAPA and Waste Management water facilities and landfills will close out the week’s agenda on Friday.

The Department of Tourism also will sponsor several cultural events in the evenings throughout the week.

“We’re really trying to showcase the Virgin Islands,” Cornwall said.

The 2009 conference theme is “A Green Future: Developing Caribbean Water and Wastewater Resources.”

“This annual opportunity to network with others who share our concerns and similar goals is invaluable as we continue to form very positive partnerships with our Caribbean neighbors. We will be meeting with some of the best experts in the field,” WAPA Executive Director Hugo Hodge Jr. said in a prepared statement.

Virgin Islanders Pedro Francois and Henry Smith will be presented with the Annual Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association Gold Award at Thursday’s closing ceremonies for their achievements in water and waste water management.

Local residents may register for the conference at a discounted price of $100 a day or $250 for the three workshop days — Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. There also is a special government agency rate. Tickets for Thursday’s awards banquet are $50 per person.

Visit www.cwwa2009.com, e-mail cwwa2009@gmail.com or call 712-4359 for more information.