

STATEMENT

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Premier Wheatley Statement on 2025 CARILEC Symposium "Informed. Empowered. Safe."

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Remarks by

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Premier of the Virgin Islands

2025 CARILEC Line-Workers Rodeo, Symposium, and Field Safety Training

"Informed. Empowered. Safe."

25 April, 2025

A pleasant good morning to everyone.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Virgin Islands, I join the board, management and staff of the British Virgin Islands Electricity Corporation in welcoming you, all our visitors, to the 2025 CARILEC Line-Workers Rodeo, Symposium, and Field Safety Training event.

It is a pleasure to be your host. We hope your stay with us is enjoyable and you can experience some of the stunning scenes and attractions that make the Virgin Islands one of the top tourist destinations in the world.

Today, we gather to celebrate you — the dedicated individuals whose tireless efforts so often go unseen yet are vital to our everyday lives.

Let us pause to truly appreciate the extraordinary work of electric power utilities and the remarkable men and women who keep our lights on.

Your contributions are easily taken for granted — until a power outage reminds us just how essential your expertise is. In moments of crisis, these skilled professionals rise to the occasion, swiftly restoring comfort and security to our communities.

Working with electrical power is not only highly technical but also inherently dangerous. It requires climbing heights, enduring the risks of electric shocks, operating heavy machinery, and navigating countless other hazards. It is essential to recognize that these are not just jobs—they are professions that require rigorous

training, specialized knowledge, and unwavering commitment.

Across the Caribbean, we know all too well the devastating impact of hurricanes and natural disasters. We've had our share of that here in the Virgin Islands. Yet, time and again, we witness neighbouring countries sending teams of linemen and technicians to restore power — a critical step in any disaster recovery effort. It is truly inspiring to see how crews from different nations seamlessly come together, working with precision and unity to accomplish such a challenging and dangerous mission.

Here in the Virgin Islands, we remember Hurricane Irma and we remember how our friends came to help us. Where would we have been without you.

This spirit of professionalism, competence, and teamwork is no accident. It is nurtured and strengthened by organizations like CARILEC, which provides invaluable platforms through symposiums, training sessions, and knowledge-sharing events. These initiatives enhance technical skills and safety practices and foster lasting relationships across member utilities. And, of course, events like the rodeo bring a spirit of friendly competition and a vibrant opportunity to raise public awareness about electric utility workers' daily vital work.

Today and every day, we honour you for your expertise, courage, and unwavering dedication.

I have noted as well that, in pursuit of its current Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2030, CARILEC has broadened its membership to include Independent Power Producers (IPPs), Individual Membership for undergraduate and postgraduate students, academics, independent practitioners such as Solar PV Installers, Energy Efficiency Auditors, EV Technicians and Consultants, and Honourary Lifetime Members. This reflects that the Association's leadership is very forward-thinking and has been responsive to the changing nature of the industry. After all, CARILEC has long advocated for sustainable electric power in the region and has been at the forefront of developing standards for sustainable power.

Against this backdrop, CARILEC recognizes the importance of member employees being informed, empowered, and safe, and the Association is doing all the

appropriate things to achieve this outcome.

I can assure you that the Virgin Islands is very committed to transforming our electric power infrastructure, particularly in transitioning to sustainable sources.

On Anegada, one of our main islands, we are on the verge of transitioning the island's power to 90 percent solar-generated, with a solar farm project nearing completion. My government has implemented some incentives to encourage residents and businesses to transition to solar energy, with the option of selling excess power back to the grid to recoup the set-up cost and eventually provide participating customers with some income. With the assistance of the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, we have trained several persons in solar installation, repair, and maintenance.

As these initiatives gain momentum, the Virgin Islands will experience a growing demand for skilled professionals, private entrepreneurs, and the BVI Electricity Corporation to deliver the necessary services. I anticipate that similar trends will emerge in other countries as well. This underscores the critical importance of the work being done by CARILEC and its members. We must continue cultivating top-tier talent—individuals who are well-informed, empowered, and committed to prioritizing safety above all else.

Once again, welcome to the Virgin Islands. I extend my best wishes to CARILEC and all attendees for a highly successful event. To all the teams competing in the rodeo—good luck, and may your skills and teamwork shine.

Enjoy the experience, make lasting connections, and have a wonderful day.

Thank you.