



# Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency

## 2020 Year Review

The preceding year has brought great change to our state as well as to the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA). After many years of public service, Administrator Tom Travis transitioned into retirement and handed the reigns of leadership off to his trusted Executive Officer, Luke Meyers, a veteran of emergency management. Under the strong leadership of now Administrator Meyers, and the drive of his appointed Executive Officer, Dave Lopez, HI-EMA has stood ever vigilant in continuing efforts to help the Hawai'i Ohana prepare for, mitigate against,



respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies. Additionally, the drastic challenges presented by the arrival and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic made 2020 a year unlike any in state history. HI-EMA adapted and evolves. Employing measures to mitigate the disease, and to modify personal behavior to protect the people of Hawai'i while also maintaining readiness for incident response, added greatly to the weight of our mission, and continues to gauge the strength and integrity of our agency.

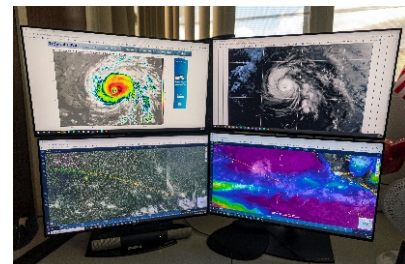
**Operations** led by Steve Sigler has been coordinating the state's monumental efforts while in COVID-19 activation for nearly a year, the longest period in agency history. Their work provides the framework for effective emergency response, regardless of challenges and on multiple fronts.



### EOC Activations

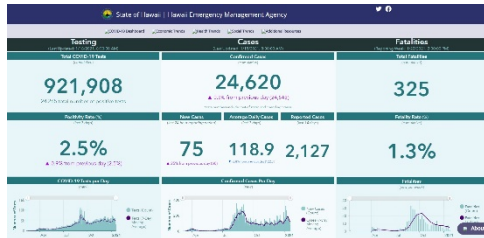
- January 2020 – High Surf Warning (Hawaii EOC partial activation); High Wind Warning (Hawaii EOC partial activation); High Surf Warning and Flood Watch (Hawaii EOC partial activation); Severe Weather/Flooding (Hawaii EOC partial activation, Maui EOC partial activation, State EOC partial activation); Shooting/Fire DH (Honolulu EOC partial activation)
- 01/24/20 – On going – COVID-19 (All EOCs partial activation)
- February 2020 – Great Aloha Run (Honolulu EOC partial activation); Kahoolawe Fire (Maui EOC partial activation); Kukaiao Ranch Fire (Hawaii EOC partial activation)
- March 2020 – EQ Kuril Islands/Tsunami Watch (All EOCs partial activation); Severe Weather/Flooding (Kauai EOC Full activation) 07/02/20 – Waianae Wildland Fire (Honolulu EOC partial activation)
- July 2020 – Halimaile Fire (Maui EOC full activation); Tropical Storm Douglas (All EOCs full activation)
- October 2020 – 7.5 Aleutian Islands EQ, Tsunami Advisory (All EOCs partial activation)
- November 2020 – General Election (All EOCs partial activation); Flash Flood Warning / Hanalei Bridge (Kauai EOC partial activation)
- County activations monitored or supported throughout the year = 17

The documentation for the 2020 COVID-19 Incident Response (on-going) produced **304 Situation Reports**, and **50 Incident Action Plans**. Another major undertaking achieved, in conjunction with Telecommunications Branch, was the relocation of the State Warning Point operations to building 303. This move provides a more efficient operation environment and accommodates the need for social distancing in accordance with the HI-EMA COVID-19 Safety Plan.





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Another significant achievement was the creation of the HI-EMA COVID-19 Dashboard which provides all partners as well as the public an aggregate collection of daily data points, trends, and pertinent information. Other operations created documentation ranging from EOC Standard Operating Procedures, SEOC COOP Plans and COVID-19 Safety, and Local Tsunami and Tropical Cyclones Checklists. Additionally, Ops

Branch supported multiple training exercises, drills and training, WebEOC administration and development, closed 28 Act 76 cases, and expanded professional development.

## State Warning Point Coordination

ACTIVITY	TOTALS
County Coordination Calls for Earthquake/Tsunamis	77
County Coordination Calls for Hurricane Watch/Warning	7
County Coordination Calls for Flash Flood Watch/Warning	65
County Coordination Calls for High Surf Watch/Warning	147
County Coordination Calls for High Wind Watch/Warning	8
County Coordination Calls for EOC/CWP Advisory	83
Coordination calls for Power Outages	11
Command Staff Coordination Calls	71
Coordination calls for State Emergency Management Officers	31



**Recovery** led by Lorinda Wong-Lau worked with FEMA and applicants to get three federally declared disasters approved for the State of Hawaii.

- *EM3529 for Hurricane Douglas (July 23-27, 2020)* was an emergency declaration for the reimbursement of mass care expenses including evacuation and shelter support. The City and County of Oahu was the only affected county.
- *DR4549 for the Kauai Rain event (March 27-28, 2020)* was a major declaration for emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities. The County of Kauai was the only affected county.
- *EM3431 was the initial emergency declaration and DR4510 was the major declaration for eligible COVID19 emergency protective measures.* All counties are eligible to claim expenses for this disaster.



The projects for three federally declared disasters were completed and HI-EMA submitted a request to FEMA for permission to close the disasters.

- *DR1743 was a storm event (December 4-7, 2007)* which affected the counties of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui. FEMA approved disaster closeout in January 2020.
- *DR1814 was a storm event (December 10-16, 2008)* which affected the City & County of Honolulu. FEMA approved disaster closeout in July 2020.
- *FM5294 was a fire management grant for the fire event (October 22-24, 2019)* on Kahana Ridge in the County of Maui. HI-EMA submitted a request to FEMA to close the disaster in December 2020.





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**External Affairs** faced a year of ever-evolving information, urgent demands for vetted data, and professional turnover, and responded with pro-active creativity. In the midst of an overall restructuring during the pandemic activation, the Public Information



branch, helmed by Douglas Carroll, dove into building an entire channel of messaging and storytelling to bring essential health information and disaster preparedness to the people of Hawai'i. Among the litany of videos that debuted on **HI-EMA's YouTube Channel** ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvTHgk3zo2ZEXm\\_iRnA0NwQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvTHgk3zo2ZEXm_iRnA0NwQ)) in 2020 is the COVID-19 series, 'FYI', business pivot stories, PSAs, the weekly Administrator's Video Message, the 'Laulima Series' profiling HI-EMA staff members, branch operational videos, and assorted promotional videos for our governmental partners. Content production continues to build this library.

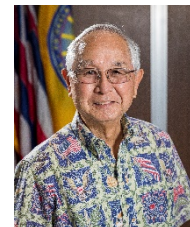


Suitably, our social media feeds (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) as well as the HI-EMA homepage, were crucial tools in battling



disinformation, and for delivering clear facts, resources and news releases. In addition, HI-EMA was an instrumental founder of the state COVID-19 JIC (Joint Information Center), working throughout this activation as a structural resource and content provider for departments and partners throughout Hawai'i.

**Mitigation** which has succeeded under the leadership of Larry Kanda for many years, is transitioning with a new hand at the helm, Theresa Woznick. Their staff more than doubled in 2020 and were thus able to manage grants in hazard mitigation and pre-disaster mitigation, totaling more than **\$15,000,000**.



They have also prepared and submitted applications to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for federal disaster assistance of nearly **\$7,500,000**.

The State Hazard Mitigation Forum convened several times to update members on the various mitigation grants. New BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) applications are being assisted with totaling approximately **\$100,000,000**, and technical and planning assistance was provided to our county partners to update their Hazard Mitigation Plans.



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**Telecommunications** played a crucial role for the State in building and supporting the technical infrastructure necessary in battling the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the siren and digital warning systems essential to alerting the people of Hawai'i of any hazards. Monthly tests on the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) were consistently conducted during the year. Under the steady hand of branch chief, Ryan Hirae, Telecommunications were very productive on many fronts.

**COVID-19** VTC, Phone, MSTeams, and Goto Meeting support  
DAIS Planning, Logistics Supplemental, and WebEOC ESF-2 support

**IT/Radio Projects** PSB/FFMB Microwave Updates, State EOC COOP to b303 OSC, B303 BRC setup, JTMC Comms setup, VTC upgrade project, WebEOC upgrades, Hilo EOC COOP to KMR project

**Sirens** 263 cases of maintenance and repair, 10 new sirens installed, special projects including Wailua siren demo, lightning strike sirens, lava sirens, and developer sirens

**Training** FBI J-Card Training for AMBER Alerts, IS-247.B: IPAWS for Alert Originators, annual Cyber Security training



**Logistics** has been re-built by its chief, David Hafner, and has grown to include 6 full time, and temporary personnel. They provide day-to-day facilities support to HI-EMA, and are responsible for the accounting, tracking, and reporting of the SESF-7 mission for COVID-19. Logistics coordinates weekly with numerous State agencies and provide frequent support to Legislative Representatives.



In addition to establishing a PPE cache for vaccine distribution totaling over **\$100,000**, Logistics coordinated with the State Procurement Office and Budget and Finance to successfully obligate nearly **\$85,000,000** for COVID Testing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Industrial Hygiene (IH), under tight time constraints, to combat COVID-19 within the State of Hawaii. A statewide PPE distribution plan was then developed and managed by HI-EMA to mitigate the risks of COVID-19. This was the largest movement of medical supplies in the state of Hawai'i since World War II.



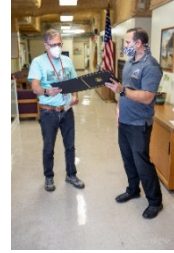
PPE Funding Allocations	
DOD 660	\$16,000,000 (\$15,300,000 obligated)
SB126	\$54,000,000 (\$54,000,000 obligated)
SB75	\$16,200,000 (\$14,200,000 obligated)
Total Appropriations	\$86,200,000 (\$83,500,000 obligated)



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### 2020 Administrator Awards

To recognize the hard work by the Team, Administrator Meyers continued the tradition of identifying Team members for the following awards: Malama (To care for or protect) Award – Hyniea Gardner; the Pookela (Commitment to excellence) Award – Kari Rachlin; and Wiwoole (Courage) Award – David Hafner. These were presented in late December at virtual all-hands meeting.



### Opportunities and Challenges

2020 presented the HI-EMA with its most challenging year since its inception. As the entire world grappled with the spread and dire effects of the COVID-19 virus, the State of Hawai'i employed methodical, science-based, practical measures, led by HI-EMA's team of experts and support staff. The fact that the Aloha State maintained some of the lowest case counts and morbidity rates in the entire country is clear evidence as to the effectiveness of the agency's broad endeavors. HI-EMA's coordination, resource planning, and financial assistance between all counties, departments, and partners were essential in mitigating spread of the disease on the islands. These significant efforts required agile thinking, great flexibility and a well of stamina from every member of every branch, while also remaining ever on guard in all hazard and disaster preparedness and response.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency has always been guided by core values: Malama – To care for or protect, Po'okela – Commitment to excellence, Laulima – Cooperation, and Wiwo'ole – Courage. These ethics and the integrity of both leadership and HI-EMA personnel provide Hawai'i the steady hand and strong support structure necessary to weather these difficult times, and in safely navigating the future. As we move forward in 2021, the HI-EMA will build on lessons learned from 2020 and focus vision ahead back to the strategic items laid out the 2020-2025 Emergency Management Strategic Plan: <https://dod.hawaii.gov/hiema/files/2020/05/Final-2020-Strategic-Plan.pdf>.