



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

August 16, 2023

EXECUTIVE MEMORANDUM

MEMO NO. 23-06

TO: All Department Heads

SUBJECT: Maui Strong

On August 8, 2023, the community of Lāhainā was devastated by the deadliest wildfire in U.S. history in more than 100 years. We are heartbroken by the loss of so many of our family, friends, and neighbors and the destruction of Lāhainā Town.

I commend the disaster response that county, state, and federal officials have taken so far, and am incredibly proud of the community outpouring of generosity throughout our islands to support the wildfire survivors.

It is imperative that our response and recovery efforts be a whole-of-government approach. Vital public-private partnerships must be forged in order to care for the survivors and bring healing to a community that has suffered the worst natural disaster in our state's history. No one person, no one agency, no one organization, can do it alone.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) is currently leading the recovery efforts on behalf of the state, in partnership with the Maui Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

However, the state's work goes far beyond HI-EMA's work. Providing timely, accurate information is one of the most important aspects of emergency response. My Communications Team, in conjunction with public information officers (PIO) statewide, with support from the Office of Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) and HI-EMA, stood up a one-stop-shop website of federal, state, county, and support resources for those affected by the wildfires, as well as those who want to help. ETS is working to ensure that every state website also has a banner at the top of each page linking to the

Maui Strong Resource Hub. **Please share the link to the Maui Strong Resource Hub (mauistrong.hawaii.gov) with your staff, friends, and family to ensure that resources are available to those who need them.**

Here are just some of the many highlights of what our departments and agencies have accomplished to date:

- President Biden signed a Major Disaster Declaration – providing a wide range of assistance for individuals and public infrastructure – just six hours after I signed the request at midnight on the morning of August 10, 2023. President Biden expressed to me the full support of the federal government.¹ Following close communications with my office, the White House announced on August 16, 2023, that President Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden would plan to visit Maui on Monday, August 21, 2023.
- To ensure a coordinated and effective response, I appointed Major General (MG) Kenneth Hara the Incident Commander.² With HI-EMA Administrator James Barros, they are working closely with County of Maui Mayor Richard T. Bissen, the Maui Emergency Management Agency and others in his administration, and federal agencies such as FEMA, the Small Business Administration (SBA), the U.S. Fire Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- I directed the Department of the Attorney General (AG) to conduct a comprehensive review of the decision-making and existing policies leading up to, during, and after the wildfires on Maui and Hawai'i Island this week.³
- The Hawai'i National Guard activated 273 guardsmen to assist first responders with search and rescue efforts and to help secure the fire-damaged areas.
- The delivery of food, water, medical supplies, and staff to mobile screening sites is being streamlined through a Joint Task Force made up of National Guard members and active-duty military personnel. I appointed Brigadier General Stephen Logan to serve as Dual Status Commander of the Joint Task Force.

¹ <https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/office-of-the-governor-news-release-pres-biden-approves-federal-disaster-relief-for-hawaii/>

² <https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/office-of-the-governor-news-release-gov-green-returning-home-for-wildfire-emergency-on-maui-big-island/>

³ <https://ag.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/News-Release-2023-36.pdf>

- After a disaster of this magnitude, many survivors will have mental health needs. The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR), which is attached to my office, is coordinating the mental health crisis response in cooperation with the Hawai'i chapters of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), helping disaster mental health volunteers understand the need and situation on the ground, and fulfill eligibility and training requirements to mobilize effectively.
- OWR Director Tia L. R. Hartsock and her staff arrived on Maui yesterday, August 15, to coordinate "mental health pop-ups" in tents outside of shelters, hotels and other places people are gathering.
- Residents suffering from emotional or psychological distress due to the Lāhainā wildfire have access to crisis mental health services through the Hawai'i Department of Health (HDOH), which is offering expanded hours for those in need.⁴
- Volunteers from the University of Hawai'i Maui College Culinary Program, together with Chefs Sheldon Simeon and Lee Anne Wong, the Salvation Army, Maui United Way, Maui Rapid Response, Maui County, and Common Ground Collective, have been preparing hot meals at the kitchen at UH Maui College for survivors affected by the wildfires.⁵ Chefs from World Central Kitchen, a global nonprofit operation, are also feeding first responders and the community on Maui and Hawai'i Island.
- We are providing much-needed tax relief, including extensions and waivers, for taxpayers who have experienced losses as a result of the 2023 wildfires. See the Department of Taxation's (DOTAX) Announcement No. 2023-03, Relief for Taxpayers Affected by the Wildfires in the Counties of Maui and Hawai'i, for more information.⁶
- Job-seeking requirements for those directly impacted by the wildfires have been waived by the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR). This waiver will allow affected survivors who have lost employment to receive UI payments; the waiver will also provide them with the time they need to heal and rebuild what they have lost. The department has also stood up an unemployment insurance (UI) call center, accessible via phone at (808) 762-5751 or (833) 901-2272.

⁴ <https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/news-release-department-of-health-maui-community-mental-health-center-offering-emergency-services-to-wildfire-victims/>

⁵ <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2023/08/10/uh-maui-college-food-preparation-hub-amidst-wildfire-tragedy/>

⁶ <https://files.hawaii.gov/tax/news/announce/ann23-03.pdf>

- DLIR Director Jade Butay was interviewed on Sunday, August 13, by KNDI Radio 1270 AM, the largest multicultural radio station in the state, to discuss the UI process with listeners in Ilocano – a shining example of a cabinet member directly fulfilling the state’s obligation to meet the language needs of our multilingual public.
- There is an urgent need to get survivors displaced by the fire into stable living environments. Just a week after the fire, our team and partners have identified 2,000 available units, and victims are moving from shelters into housing. This effort will be accelerated by the efforts of the Hawai’i Fire Relief Housing Program, launched on August 14, 2023, by the Hawai’i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC), an agency attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT). Help is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., seven days a week.⁷
- Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke led a tremendous donation drive at the State Capitol and has been coordinating efforts to centralize larger donation hubs to relieve the shelters from excess materials and to ensure donations are available at every stage of our recovery.⁸
- A large Disaster Recovery Center that will provide a one-stop shop for survivor services that will be shared by state agencies, FEMA, and other federal agencies, was secured by the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS).
- On August 13, 2023, Superintendent Keith Hayashi, of the Department of Education (DOE), reported that King Kamehameha III Elementary School was damaged beyond repair. King Kekaulike High School, Princess Nāhi’ena’ena Elementary School, Lāhainā Intermediate School, and Lahainaluna High School were also damaged by the fire and remain closed. The DOE is actively examining options to relocate affected students to other schools and continue to provide essential support services to our keiki.⁹

⁷ <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/hawaii-fire-relief-housing-program/>

⁸ <https://ltgov.hawaii.gov/main/officials-and-community-leaders-outline-coordinated-distribution-effort-for-maui-fire-donations/>

⁹ <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/Superintendent-Lahaina-Message.aspx>

- The DOE helped set up a Red Cross evacuation center at Maui High School, which has since relocated to the South Maui Gymnasium in Kīhei.¹⁰
- During the week of the fire, the Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) reported that its airports transported 11,000 to 14,000 passengers per day from Maui – or about 40,000 people in total.
- HDOT has announced that the state will waive wharfage charges for cargo inbound to Kahului Harbor in order to support humanitarian relief to Maui between August 11 and September 10, 2023.¹¹
- The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA), Division of Financial Institutions (DFI) is actively working with federal counterparts to provide relief to homeowners affected by the Maui wildfires.¹²
- Under Executive Director Mana Moriarty of the DCCA's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP), the DCCA is also making a concerted effort to protect homeowners from predatory real estate purchases.¹³
- We are helping to ensure that nonresident independent adjusters and insurance companies can and will respond to property owners' needs in a timely fashion through a declaration issued by Gordon I. Ito, Insurance Commissioner.¹⁴
- HI-EMA activated the Joint Information Center (JIC) with the assistance of PIOs statewide to centralize communications processes and to support timely information updates.¹⁵

¹⁰ <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/maui-school-closures.aspx>

¹¹ <https://hidot.hawaii.gov/blog/2023/08/11/state-waives-wharfage-on-necessities-to-aid-maui-relief/>

¹² <https://cca.hawaii.gov/blog/release-relief-available-for-homeowners-impacted-by-maui-wildfires/>

¹³ <https://cca.hawaii.gov/blog/release-maui-homeowners-urged-to-exercise-caution-report-unsolicited-offers-to-buy-their-properties/>

¹⁴ <https://cca.hawaii.gov/ins/declaration-from-the-state-insurance-commissioner-regarding-assistance-of-nonresident-independent-adjusters-due-to-fires-across-the-state/>

¹⁵ <https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/news-release-hawaii-emergency-management-agency-activates-joint-information-center-for-wildfires/>

- The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) has been engaged in fire containment, debris removal, historic site assessments, and, in coordination with HI-EMA and the United States Coast Guard, site assessment of Lāhainā Harbor.
- ETS deployed two StarLink terminals to the Maui Police Department and Kapalua Airport to enable both entities to support wildfire recovery efforts.
- The Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) deployed DHRD Deputy Director Ryan Yamane to lead our coordination of Red Cross relief efforts.
- Community members are caring for the 150-year-old banyan tree that continues to stand in Lāhainā as a symbol and source of hope and resilience for the entire community.

As we move forward, I urge you to continue to prioritize your Department's policies and procedures to provide immediate relief for the survivors of West Maui – including your own employees – who are in need of not only food, water, and shelter, but also physical and mental health services, time and safe spaces to grieve and heal, and public construction projects to rebuild Lāhainā's infrastructure.

The road to recovery will be long, costly, and challenging. We lost lives, landmarks, and cultural artifacts that can never be replaced. We have an opportunity and a challenge to work together, as one 'ohana, in solidarity with the people of Lāhainā and West Maui.

Now is the time for us – as one 'ohana – to come together to care for the residents of our State and for one another.

Mahalo,

/s/

Josh Green, M.D.
Governor, State of Hawai'i