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**STATE OF HAWAI'I AND THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
AGENCY HIGHLIGHT COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO SUPPORT
LAHAINA WILDFIRE SURVIVORS IN RECOVERY PROCESS**

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HONOLULU — The state of Hawai'i and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are actively working together to continue supporting survivors of the Lahaina wildfires. Millions of dollars in assistance have already been provided.

At the request of the state of Hawai'i, FEMA authorized the implementation of Direct Housing. Although the period for Direct Temporary Housing Assistance ended on February 10, 2025, the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) successfully requested a 12-month extension for the program on August 13, 2024. As a result, the housing assistance deadline was extended to February 10, 2026. With this new timeline, both the state of Hawai'i and FEMA are fully committed to ensuring a smooth and effective recovery for all affected households.

FEMA has made significant strides in engaging directly with survivors, offering multiple outreach efforts to discuss unique circumstances and explore viable housing solutions. Monthly informational sessions have been conducted since October 16, 2024, to ensure that survivors are aware of their options and the support available to them.

“Our regular contacts with the Maui survivor community have made it clear that continued recovery support is needed,” said Governor Josh Green, M.D. “While we are in a challenging time given the new federal funding landscape, we continue our push to get every dollar possible to our neighbors on Maui, both in terms of the survivors and the service providers who are helping them. I applaud our partners at FEMA and the team at HIEMA for their constant efforts on behalf of Maui’s people.”

FEMA is required by law to charge rent for direct housing 18 months after a disaster is declared. Beginning March 1, 2025, all Direct Housing households will be responsible for paying rent to FEMA.

FEMA remains committed to ensuring that disaster survivors have access to safe, temporary housing while they recover. Rent adjustments are based on federal guidelines to ensure fairness and consistency, and the appeals process is in place to allow for a thorough review of individual circumstances.

FEMA has proactively communicated with survivors since last year at 90-, 60-, and 30- day intervals, providing updates and guidance on the program. Survivors also received certified mail with essential information. The goal has been to provide clear, consistent communication and personalized support to ensure survivors have the information they need.

To date, FEMA has reviewed 90% of appeals submitted by survivors, showcasing its commitment to helping individuals and families regain a sense of stability and security. This not only reflects FEMA’s dedication to the recovery process, but also highlights its outreach efforts in connecting with those who have faced significant challenges.

“Efforts to streamline the appeals review process have allowed for accelerated decision making, enabling impacted families to access the resources they need without unnecessary delays. Each appeal processed represents a step toward restoring hope and stability, reinforcing our mission to support and empower communities affected by disasters,” said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Teresa Serata.

Throughout the recovery process, FEMA has played a pivotal role in ensuring that survivors are immediately placed into suitable housing solutions. This momentum is vital as it paves the way for households to transition from temporary arrangements into permanent homes, which is essential for rebuilding lives and fostering community resilience.

“With continued collaboration between the state, FEMA, and individual households, we can work together to achieve greater outcomes,” said HIEMA Administrator James Barros. “Our commitment to serving survivors remains steadfast, and we invite all eligible households to actively participate in the appeals process to ensure they receive the assistance they rightfully deserve.”

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