

Disaster Preparedness Guide

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE LOWEN

Kailua-Kona • Hōlualoa • Honokōhau • Kalaea

Hawai'i's Growing Wildfire Problem

In August of 2021, a 40,000 acre wildfire blazed through Hawai'i Island—the largest in the State's history. Wildfires have been occurring more often in recent years due to increasingly frequent drought conditions. While wildfires are more likely to occur during the dry season, they are a year-round hazard. Unlike other types of disasters we see in Hawai'i, most wildfires are caused by people.

Wildfires threaten natural resources, native habitats, and people's lives and property. As land use and climate have changed over time, non-native, fire-adapted vegetation has rapidly spread through Hawai'i's wildland landscapes, adding to fire risk. Invasive vegetation ignites easily and regrows quickly, creating a vicious fire cycle. See inside for a checklist of what you can do to help prevent wildfires.



Hurricanes and Tropical Storms

Hurricanes (sometimes called typhoons) are strong storms that are the most destructive on earth. Hurricanes bring high wind, heavy rain, storm surge and high tides, creating danger from flying debris and flooding, especially near coastlines and waterways. Although hurricanes rarely make landfall in Hawai'i, the tropical storms and depressions that reach our shores more often can be just as dangerous and destructive. In Hawai'i, hurricane season runs from June through November. See inside for an emergency kit checklist, and below for other ways to prepare.

Before a Storm

- Trim branches and clear gutters
- Bring outdoor furniture and other items indoors
- Review your family emergency plan
- Unplug unnecessary electrical equipment and appliances
- Be prepared to evacuate if ordered and have emergency kit ready
- Take photos of your property for insurance purposes

After a Storm

- Be aware of hazards like downed power lines, glass, fallen trees, etc.
- Assess your home and take photos of any damage for insurance purposes
- Remove standing water including mattresses, carpets and other items that can hold water and become moldy
- Clean and disinfect any areas that may have been exposed to floodwaters
- Service damaged septic systems, cesspools, etc. as soon as possible



*Aloha
Neighbors,*

In recent years, Hawai'i Island has experienced numerous natural disasters, including wildfires, hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. These events can occur suddenly and with little warning. While we hope for the best in these situations, we must prepare for the worst.

Enclosed you will find useful information and resources to help you prepare your home and your family for potential disaster events.

As always, please reach out if we can assist you in any way!

Mahalo nui loa,

Nicole

Rep. Nicole Lowen

Are You 2 Weeks Ready?

Prepare an Emergency Kit



Water: 1 gallon per person, per day



Food (non-perishable)



Radio



Personal hygiene items



Extra batteries



First aid kit



Sturdy shoes



IDs and important documents



Toilet paper



Can opener



Flashlight



Cash



Towels & blankets



Rain gear



Baby care items



Pet supplies



Tools



Masks/PPE

Printable Emergency Kit Checklist



Do Your Part to Help Prevent Wildfires

- Clear leaves and debris from gutters and roofs and remove flammable materials from next to or under your house and lanai
- Keep grass short and don't mow in the heat of the day or in dry vegetation
- Clear green waste and leaves or plant debris from property
- Park cars on paved areas or where vegetation is trimmed and cleared
- Clear vegetation 10 feet around campfires and BBQs, keep a shovel and water nearby, and put fires out completely before walking away
- Fireworks are a common cause of brushfires, so opt to enjoy public fireworks displays instead of at-home to maximize safety and fire prevention
- Be sure machinery like chainsaws, weedwhackers, and recreational vehicles like ATVs have working spark arrestors and are regularly maintained

Flash Floods: Turn Around, Don't Drown

Flash floods are a common hazard in Hawai'i and can occur quickly and without warning. Flash floods can be incredibly powerful, fast, and dangerous, and are the leading cause of direct weather-related deaths in the State. A person can be swept away in as little as 6 inches of water and a car in 2 feet of water. While flash floods can occur during any time of year, they are most frequent during the wet season from October to April. They can occur even if it is sunny outside due to rain clouds higher up in the mountains. In the event of a flash flood, stay off the road if possible, and avoid streams and waterways. If you do encounter flooded roadways, **turn around, don't drown**. Also, as many flood related incidents involve hikers, please check weather forecasts before hiking and avoid waterways if heavy rain is expected. Floodwaters can be contaminated with oil, gas, raw sewage and other dangerous pollutants, and can be electrified due to downed powerlines so avoid floodwaters if possible.

Earthquakes: Drop, Cover and Hold On

Thousands of earthquakes occur every year in Hawai'i, with the overwhelming majority of these occurring on or near Hawai'i Island. While most are so small that they can only be detected by sensitive instruments, some are strong enough to be felt, and occasionally even to cause significant property damage and other impacts. If you are inside when a strong earthquake occurs, **drop down and take cover** under a desk or table and stay away from windows. If you are outdoors, find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, and power lines, and drop to the ground. If you are in your car, slow down, and pull over to a clear place, and remain in your car until the shaking stops. Earthquakes can cause tsunamis, so if you are within the tsunami evacuation zone when a strong earthquake hits, head to higher ground after the shaking stops. Read on for more information on tsunamis.

Tsunamis: Head to Higher Ground

Tsunamis are a series of strong ocean waves generated primarily by earthquakes, although they can also be caused by underwater volcanic eruptions and landslides. Tsunamis flood the land and pick up and carry debris, which increases the chance of injury, property damage, and death. Local tsunamis are ones that are caused by a local rather than a distant event, and these can occur very quickly, leaving only minutes to respond – **if you are near the ocean and feel the earth shake, head to higher ground immediately**. If you are unable to quickly leave the tsunami evacuation zone, look for a structural steel or reinforced concrete building and vertically evacuate to the fourth floor or higher, if possible. Tsunamis often come in multiple waves over a period of hours, so do not assume a tsunami is over if you see water receding. If you are evacuated, return home only after authorities say it is safe to do so.

Watches, Warnings, and Advisories: What Do They Mean?

- △ A **watch** is issued when the risk of a hazardous event has increased significantly but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. If a watch is issued, please begin preparations and stay tuned for further updates.
- △ An **advisory** is issued when a hazardous event is occurring, imminent, or likely. Advisories are for less serious conditions than warnings that, if caution is not exercised, could lead to situations that may threaten life or property.
- △ A **warning** is issued when a hazardous event is occurring, imminent, or likely. A warning means conditions are expected to pose a threat to life or property. People in the path of the event should act immediately.

Are You in the Tsunami Evacuation Zone?





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Additional Resources

Hawai'i County Civil Defense:

www.hawaiiicounty.gov/civil-defense

Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA):

www.ready.hawaii.gov

HI-EMA — Tsunami Evacuation Zones:

dod.hawaii.gov/hiema/public-resources/tsunami-evacuation-zone/

American Red Cross—Hawai'i Chapter

www.redcross.org/hawaii

Central Pacific Hurricane Center:

www.nhc.noaa.gov/?cpac

NOAA Tsunami Center:

www.tsunami.gov

National Weather Service:

www.weather.gov/hfo

Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization:

www.hawaiiwildfire.org/lookout

Emergency Radio Frequencies:

KKON 790AM

KHPH 88.7FM

KKBG 97.9FM

Prepare Your 'Ohana Emergency Plan

An emergency plan can make a big difference during or following a disaster. Remember to create a plan for your family and review it once a year. For a comprehensive plan template, see HI-EMA in our web resources section.

Things to include in your Emergency Plan:

- Emergency contact info for household members, family, friends, doctors, insurance, schools, etc.
- Evacuation routes and a meeting location in case you and your family get separated.
- Your child's school evacuation sites and emergency protocol.
- Emergency checklist (e.g. prepare emergency kit, fill gas tanks at least 1/4 full, review family emergency plan, gather important documents, etc.).
- Determine family member responsibilities in the event of a disaster.