
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina
2 revealed severe shortcomings of the health care system serving
3 the residents of the Gulf Coast. And while the earthquake that
4 shook Hawaii on October 15, 2006, did not cause severe damage,
5 it underscored the need to assess the ability of Hawaii's health
6 care system to withstand natural disasters.

7 The Office of Domestic Preparedness of the Department of
8 Homeland Security issued a directive to each state requiring
9 each state to assess its ability to evacuate and shelter
10 residents in the event of a disaster. Of particular concern
11 were the special populations served by hospitals and long-term
12 care facilities.

13 The Katrina experience demonstrated that smaller
14 residential health care facilities on the Gulf Coast, such as
15 nursing homes, were not constructed to withstand strong winds.
16 Hawaii is in a similar situation. Discussions with nursing home
17 executives revealed that they were uncertain whether their
18 facilities could resist the effects of a hurricane. Most felt



1 they would be compelled to evacuate their residents because of
2 this uncertainty. However, the availability of shelters that
3 are specially designed for nursing home residents is
4 insufficient.

5 Although state officials are currently working to establish
6 special needs shelters and to improve evacuation procedures,
7 they concede that the number of actual and potential shelters
8 are inadequate to house and protect the large numbers of
9 possible evacuees.

10 The evacuation of nursing home residents should be
11 considered only after all other options have been explored.
12 Enabling nursing homes to "shelter in place" their residents and
13 staff is the preferred alternative, because it eliminates any
14 risks resulting from transportation and does not use scarce
15 emergency shelter resources. However, this option requires
16 confidence in the structural integrity of a nursing home.

17 Hospitals are typically more prepared to address disasters
18 than nursing homes. For example, hospitals have comprehensive
19 plans that will be implemented in the event of a pandemic or
20 terrorist attack. However, the Katrina experience underscores
21 the need to assess hospital facilities as well as to determine
22 their ability to withstand hurricanes.



1 The purpose of this Act is to fund a study to assess the
2 structural integrity of each hospital and nursing home facility
3 in Hawaii.

4 SECTION 2. The department of health shall undertake a
5 study to assess the structural integrity of all hospitals and
6 nursing homes in Hawaii. The assessment shall be conducted by
7 registered professional engineers qualified to conduct
8 structural analysis and knowledgeable in the effects of
9 hurricanes. The assessment shall include rating each facility
10 based on its ability to survive the likely effects of hurricanes
11 in categories I, II, III, IV, and V and earthquakes as strong as
12 magnitude 8.5.

13 Information derived from the assessment shall be provided
14 to facility owners and operators and used to support risk-based
15 disaster plans. The information shall also be provided to local
16 and state civil defense officials and used to support evacuation
17 decisions. A summary of the assessment shall be provided to the
18 legislature not later than twenty days prior to the convening of
19 the regular session of 2009.

20 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,000,000 or so much
22 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for a



1 study to assess the structural integrity of all hospitals and
2 nursing homes in Hawaii.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
4 health for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 18 2008



Report Title:

Disaster Preparedness; Structural Assessment; Hospitals

Description:

Funds a study to assess the structural integrity of each hospital and nursing home facility to determine their ability to withstand hurricanes and earthquakes. Makes appropriation.

