

COUNCIL OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

February 3, 2006

**Committee
Report No.**

_____ 06-11

Honorable Chair and Members
of the County Council
County of Maui
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii

Chair and Members:

Your Committee of the Whole, having met on November 1, 2005 and January 17, 2006, makes reference to County Communication No. 05-310, from Councilmember Dain P. Kane, relating to the matter of the County's disaster preparedness.

By correspondence dated October 10, 2005, the Council Chair transmitted correspondence dated October 5, 2005, from Councilmember Danny A. Mateo inquiring as to the status of the County's disaster and emergency preparedness.

By correspondence dated October 27, 2005, the Chair of your Committee transmitted a news article from the *Honolulu Advertiser* entitled, "\$35M needed to make Islands disaster-ready".

By correspondence dated October 27, 2005, Joseph Pluta, Lahaina Rotary Club Speaker Chairman, transmitted a copy of correspondence dated September 8, 2005 to the Civil Defense Administrator, inquiring about disaster preparedness.

At its meeting of November 1, 2005, your Committee met with a Deputy Corporation Counsel; Anna Foust, Maui County Disaster Coordinator, American Red Cross; Ululani Correa, Executive Director, Maui Hotel Association; and Craig Tanaka, Director of Loss Prevention, Maui Prince Hotel.

Your Committee received two written testimonies from individuals. The first testimony provided comments on disaster preparedness on Lanai. The second testimony provided comments on the need to invest in improvements to address the relocation of the Kahului Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Your Committee received a computer generated slideshow presentation on the American Red Cross's role in disaster preparedness for the County of Maui, from Ms. Foust. Ms. Foust provided a printed copy of her slideshow, a pamphlet entitled "DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR MAUI COUNTY: A CITIZEN'S GUIDE (With Evacuation Plan)" prepared by the County of Maui Civil Defense Agency; a pamphlet

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entitled, "Preparing for Disaster" by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Red Cross; and a pamphlet entitled "Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs" by FEMA and the American Red Cross.

Your Committee expressed disappointment and concern at the lack of representation from the Civil Defense Agency.

Your Committee discussed the role of the American Red Cross in response to a hurricane. Ms. Foust noted that the American Red Cross would contact and prepare shelter teams 72 hours prior to the expected impact of the hurricane. She said that shelters would be opened 24 to 48 hours prior to the expected hurricane impact. Ms. Foust stated that when a tsunami is anticipated, shelters are not opened prior to the anticipated impact due to the shortness of warning time prior to a tsunami's arrival. Ms. Foust indicated that approximately 32,000 people can be accommodated at shelters that would be set up at 23 schools throughout the County.

Your Committee briefly discussed disaster preparedness for pets and animals. Ms. Foust indicated that animals are not permitted at American Red Cross shelters although the organization does communicate and coordinate for animal needs with the Maui Humane Society. Your Committee discussed the need for pet and animal owners to have a disaster preparedness plan for their pets and animals.

Your Committee discussed disaster preparedness for tourists. Ms. Correa and Mr. Tanaka indicated that hotels and resorts have disaster preparedness plans and supplies to accommodate their guests.

Your Committee discussed the frequency of updating the American Red Cross's volunteer list. Ms. Foust indicated that a comprehensive update of the volunteer list is done once per year with the involvement of most government agencies.

Your Committee discussed how the American Red Cross would assist residents on Molokai and Lanai. Ms. Foust said she would provide telephone contact numbers for the American Red Cross on both islands.

Your Committee discussed the need to strengthen the ability to be responsive to the community. Your Community further discussed the possibility of televising "tabletop" exercises involving meetings between various government agencies and the American Red Cross.

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Your Committee briefly discussed the role of the Maui Department of Police in disaster preparedness, and expressed an interest in having a representative of the Department attend a future meeting on the topic of disaster preparedness.

Your Committee discussed the need for personal accountability in disaster preparedness by having personal disaster kits, personal identification, and medication available. Individuals should also be prepared to notify family members of their location.

Your Committee deferred the matter pending further discussion.

By correspondence dated November 7, 2005, Anna Foust, Maui Disaster Coordinator, American Red Cross, provided contact numbers for the American Red Cross on Molokai and Lanai.

By correspondence dated November 16, 2005, the Chair of your Committee requested that the Civil Defense Administrator respond to a Lanai constituent's inquiry on disaster preparedness for Lanai, that a copy of his response be transmitted to your Committee, and that he or his representative attend an upcoming committee meeting.

By correspondence dated November 18, 2005 the Chair of your Committee transmitted a news article dated November 18, 2005 from *The Maui News* entitled "Stuck at home – Few options for homebound seniors in case of disaster".

By correspondence dated December 15, 2005 (received on December 20, 2005), the Civil Defense Administrator provided a copy of correspondence dated November 29, 2005 to the Lanai constituent regarding disaster preparedness for Lanai, as well as information on the Civil Defense Agency's disaster preparedness.

By correspondence dated December 19, 2005, the Chair of your Committee requested a response to your Committee's November 16, 2005 inquiry, and a detailed written description of the Civil Defense Agency's current state of disaster preparedness for natural disasters in Maui County.

By correspondence dated December 27, 2005, the Civil Defense Administrator provided another copy of his December 15, 2005 correspondence.

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At its meeting of January 17, 2006, your Committee met with the Civil Defense Administrator and a Deputy Corporation Counsel.

There was no public testimony.

Your Committee discussed the siren alert system. The Civil Defense Administrator clarified that the siren system is under the jurisdiction of the State, and the County of Maui provides some maintenance assistance and testing of the system. He noted that there are 74 sirens and simulators in the County of Maui, and that 80 to 90 percent of these sirens and simulators are currently functioning properly. He further noted that both the Civil Defense Agency and the Department of Police each take turns with the monthly testing of the sirens.

Your Committee discussed the warning system in Hana, particularly for tsunami alerts. The Civil Defense Administrator said that technology has improved over time and that adequate warning should be available in the Hana area.

Your Committee suggested having a more realistic timeframe for assistance to remote areas, such as Hana, when a disaster hits.

Your Committee further discussed funding for retrofitting of buildings and the need for the County to participate in funding retrofitting of buildings for safety purposes.

The Civil Defense Administrator said that newly adopted standards for the amount of space allocated to each person in an emergency shelter have increased the size of the space per person from 10 square feet to 15 square feet. As a result, where the County of Maui could have previously provided 35,000 spaces in emergency shelters, they are now only able to provide 23,000 spaces. He noted that this is still approximately 92,000 spaces less than what would be needed in a Countywide emergency.

Your Committee discussed the County of Maui's preparedness with regard to a tsunami disaster. The Civil Defense Administrator indicated that the University of Hawaii is currently in the process of mapping shoreline areas for tsunami inundation. Your Committee expressed concern regarding the limitations on road capacity in South Maui in the case of an evacuation due to a tsunami.

Your Committee discussed the possible formation of a State emergency preparation team to be led by each of the counties. The Civil Defense Administrator

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indicated that his agency is not currently involved in the formation of this team. He indicated that his office maintains contact with a Countywide preparedness team. He further indicated that civil defense coordinators have been stationed in remote areas such as Hana, Lahaina, Lanai, and Molokai to assist in the event of an emergency.

Your Committee inquired as to the Administration's plans or policies regarding an evacuation and transportation plan for the frail, elderly, and disabled in our community that may be stranded in a natural disaster. The Civil Defense Administrator stated a need to examine this aspect of disaster preparedness.

Your Committee of the Whole **RECOMMENDS** that County Communication No. 05-310 be FILED.

Adoption of this report is respectfully requested.

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MICHAEL J. MOLINA **Chair**

JO ANNE JOHNSON **Member**

DAIN P. KANE **Vice-Chair**

DANNY A. MATEO **Member**

MICHELLE ANDERSON **Member**

JOSEPH PONTANILLA **Member**

ROBERT CARROLL **Member**

CHARMAINE TAVARES **Member**

G. RIKI HOKAMA **Member**