

## ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready for a disaster?

As we all know, land is at a premium in Hawaii. One of the areas affected by this is the shelter space during emergencies. The largest shelter on Oahu is the Hawaii Convention Center, with about 18,000 person capacity, followed by the Neal Blaisdell Center. DOE schools provide 93% of shelter space. Altogether, given the dense population on Oahu, there is only room to accommodate 30-35% of our island's population and visitors. What does that mean? Most of us will need to "shelter in place," that is, to stay put at our own homes or that of our friends or family.

Among the out-of-the-box solutions for increasing shelter capacity for disasters is use of other spaces, such as community centers, theatres, churches, and the like. The one-piece, concrete construction makes these buildings ideal for providing a safe place for people during and following a natural or other large-scale emergency. The single wall construction, which we use to keep housing prices affordable, does not have the needed safety structure to withstand winds, after all, having a roof fly off in case of disaster takes away protection from flying debris that could cause injury.

The advantages to sheltering-in-place are that it helps minimize interruption to one's routine, as well as being able to keep needed items conveniently located. Whether you find yourself having to go to a shelter or stay where you are, being prepared for emergency is everyone's responsibility. Shelters don't have supplies, and everyone going to a public shelter must bring their own. This is a suggested list of items *for each person* that you should have to be ready in case we are hit by a hurricane, tsunami, or other disaster:

- Seven to ten days of drinkable water - 1 gallon per day per person or about 8 - 16 oz. bottles of water per day per person
- Five to ten days of non-perishable food per person and non-electric can opener
- Special medications or diets and ordinary medicine such as pain relievers or cold medicine
- Portable radio
- Flashlights
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Personal hygiene / sanitary supplies / toilet articles / diapers
- Change of clothes
- Sleeping bags / blankets / pillow

For more preparedness advice, you can consult the phone book or the American Red Cross ([redcross.org](http://redcross.org)) or the City and County of Honolulu's ([Honolulu.gov/ocda](http://Honolulu.gov/ocda)) websites.

The City's evacuation zone maps are also on the website, so you can see whether your home may be vulnerable. The shelter list is also there, so it's a good idea to consult it and be familiar with your options before the need arises.

### *Government Preparation*

The relevant government agencies are currently developing a statewide emergency operations plan for high level events such as another Iniki-strength hurricane or the much-touted pandemic flu. The preparation for pre-, during-, and post-disaster emergency management involves extensive coordination among the counties, state, and federal agencies, as well as non-profit agencies, industry associations, and community groups.

Let's take an example of a hurricane hitting Waikiki to see just how many agencies are involved in emergency management. The federal government's National Weather Service posts advisories on natural disasters potentially en route. The state's emergency operations center is located in the naturally fortified Diamond Head Crater area. Once a storm crosses the 140-degree longitudinal line, meaning it's arrived in the Pacific area, it becomes "of interest" to Hawaii, and the emergency operations center is activated, and the tropical storm is monitored. A conference call is made to the different counties and emergency partners in the military, utilities, and agencies such as the American Red Cross and volunteers from the amateur radio civil defense volunteers.

State non-disaster employees are released and the DOE is contacted to begin school closings. When the storm reaches 600 nautical miles from landfall, the sirens are sounded, and the Civil Air Patrol - a non-government entity - is contacted, requesting them to consider conducting warnings in areas not currently covered by sirens. The counties are responsible for evacuation and shelter opening. The American Red Cross is in charge of shelter operation, and its volunteers are deployed to the various shelters designated for the emergency.

Pet-friendly shelters include McKinley, Roosevelt and Kalani High Schools as well as state agricultural buildings. Pet owners must provide their own cages and pet food supplies for their animals.

The police and bus system are also involved, with police directing drivers to return home or to an appropriate shelter facility. Our public buses will provide transportation to shelters.

The Hawaii Hotel Visitors Industry Security Association has its own emergency shelter in the Sheraton Waikiki to coordinate emergency management for our

tourists. On any given day, an estimated 60,000 visitors will be in Waikiki, with another 40,000 somewhere else on the island, and another 60,000 on the neighbor islands. Those tourists in Waikiki will be directed to take shelter in their hotels, where hallways, ballrooms, and stairwells provide safe areas. Those around the island will hopefully follow directions to shelters.

It's an extensive effort, coordinating many agencies and involving many emergency personnel and volunteers.