
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS.

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

1 PART I

2 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that household emergency
3 preparedness is a critical element of statewide resilience and
4 continuity during hurricanes, floods, wildfires, earthquakes,
5 tsunamis, pandemics, supply chain disruptions, and other
6 emergencies. The State is geographically remote and faces
7 heightened risk from delays in external response and support
8 during major disasters, increasing the importance of household
9 self-sufficiency and advance readiness.

10 The legislature further finds that the Hawaii emergency
11 management agency recommends that households maintain a
12 fourteen-day supply of essential emergency supplies, including
13 food, water, and regularly used medications.

14 Only twelve per cent of households statewide appear to meet
15 the fourteen-day standard. Indeed, household preparedness
16 varies across counties; estimates of full adherence to the
17 fourteen-day standard include approximately 11.5 per cent in the



1 city and county of Honolulu, 19.5 per cent in the county of
2 Hawaii, 8.9 per cent in Maui county, and 8.5 per cent in Kauai
3 county. Also, many households perceive themselves as prepared
4 while not meeting the fourteen-day standard, indicating a
5 substantial gap between perceived preparedness and actual
6 readiness.

7 The legislature further finds that reported barriers to
8 meeting the fourteen-day standard include limited storage space
9 and lack of information, among other constraints. Also, limited
10 public awareness of the fourteen-day standard remains a key
11 obstacle.

12 The legislature further finds that households that are
13 aware of Hawaii emergency management agency's updated fourteen-
14 day recommendation and households that are familiar with general
15 preparedness guidelines are more likely to be prepared and to
16 comply with recommended stockpiling for water, food, and medical
17 supplies.

18 The legislature further finds that residents' preferred
19 channels for receiving preparedness information differ by age
20 group, supporting the need for a coordinated, multi-channel
21 communications strategy, including television for older groups



1 and internet news and social media for younger groups. Research
2 recommends a statewide multi-media communications plan and
3 strategy, including television, internet, radio, and mobile
4 applications, to raise public awareness of HIEMA's recommended
5 fourteen-day supply of household emergency food, water, and
6 medicine.

7 The purpose of this part is to strengthen public readiness
8 by requiring the Hawaii emergency management agency to develop
9 and implement a statewide public education and communications
10 program to educate and motivate residents to maintain a
11 fourteen-day supply of food, water, and essential medications,
12 using culturally appropriate, accessible, and multilingual
13 materials to meet the language access needs of residents with
14 limited English proficiency, and to evaluate and report its
15 progress to the legislature.

16 SECTION 2. Chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
17 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
18 and to read as follows:

19 **"§127A-A Fourteen-day emergency preparedness**
20 **communications program.** (a) The agency shall develop and
21 implement by July 1, 2027, a statewide public education and



1 communications program to increase household preparedness
2 consistent with the agency's fourteen-day essential supplies
3 recommendation for food, water, and regularly used medications.

4 (b) The program shall include the development of a
5 comprehensive communications plan and the creation and
6 dissemination of related media assets. At a minimum, the plan
7 shall:

- 8 (1) Identify priority audiences, with attention to
9 populations disproportionately affected by disasters,
10 including but not limited to households with low
11 incomes, kupuna, persons with disabilities or access
12 and functional needs, medically vulnerable
13 individuals, and communities with limited English
14 proficiency;
- 15 (2) Provide clear, actionable guidance on how households
16 can build and maintain a fourteen-day supply through
17 phased and affordable steps, including messaging that
18 supports dignity, practicality, and realistic
19 household budgeting, and that addresses commonly
20 reported barriers, including limited storage space and
21 information gaps;



- 1 (3) Include culturally relevant and multilingual
2 communications materials appropriate for statewide
3 use, including in formats accessible to persons with
4 disabilities;
- 5 (4) Specify and implement a statewide multi-media
6 dissemination strategy, including the use of
7 television, internet news sites, social media
8 platforms, local radio, and mobile-based
9 communications, and tailor channel emphasis to
10 documented age-group preferences;
- 11 (5) Establish a coordinated dissemination schedule for
12 year-round outreach and targeted outreach during
13 seasonal risk periods;
- 14 (6) Strengthen and expand practical information pathways
15 for preparedness guidance, including:
 - 16 (A) Maintaining and promoting updated preparedness
17 content on the agency's website;
 - 18 (B) Increasing enrollment in emergency information
19 updates and alerts;



- 1 (C) Equipping state and county agencies and community
- 2 partners with co-branded toolkits to support
- 3 diffusion through trusted community ties; and
- 4 (D) Incorporating in-person or virtual informational
- 5 meetings as appropriate for priority audiences;
- 6 and
- 7 (7) Include an evaluation framework with measurable
- 8 outcomes, including baseline and follow-up measures
- 9 of:
- 10 (A) Public awareness of the agency's fourteen-day
- 11 recommendation;
- 12 (B) Familiarity with emergency preparedness
- 13 guidelines; and
- 14 (C) The share of households meeting the fourteen-day
- 15 readiness threshold for water, food, and medical
- 16 supplies, including the share of households
- 17 meeting the threshold for all essential supplies
- 18 combined, to the extent feasible.
- 19 (c) Media assets developed under this section may include
- 20 but shall not be limited to:



- 1 (1) Public service announcements for radio, television,
2 and digital platforms;
- 3 (2) Print-ready and digital graphics, fact sheets,
4 checklists, and household planning templates;
- 5 (3) A fourteen-day readiness social media and partner
6 communications toolkit for organizations and agencies;
- 7 (4) Short instructional videos and multilingual audio
8 content; and
- 9 (5) Templates that counties, community partners, and state
10 agencies may co-brand for consistent statewide
11 messaging.
- 12 (d) The agency may consult and coordinate with relevant
13 state and county agencies and community partners to implement
14 this section, including but not limited to the department of
15 health; the department of education; the department of human
16 services; the office of Hawaiian affairs; and county emergency
17 management agencies, as appropriate.
- 18 (e) The agency shall incorporate targeted communications
19 that emphasize region-specific emergency preparedness
20 recommendations and community-based practices, and may implement
21 multimedia communications and georeferenced maps to attract



1 public attention to the urgent need for households to adhere to
2 the agency's fourteen-day recommendations; provided that
3 outreach shall include multilingual strategies and
4 community-based information sessions appropriate for the State's
5 diverse populations."

6 SECTION 3. (a) The Hawaii emergency management agency
7 shall submit a report to the legislature on the implementation
8 and outcomes of this part no later than twenty days prior to the
9 convening of each regular session beginning with the regular
10 session of 2028 and continuing through the regular session of
11 2030.

12 (b) The report shall include, at a minimum:

- 13 (1) The comprehensive communications plan developed
14 pursuant to section 127A-A(b), Hawaii Revised
15 Statutes, including any updates made during the
16 reporting period;
- 17 (2) A summary of media assets produced and dissemination
18 activities conducted, including the channels used and
19 the frequency and timing of dissemination;



- 1 (3) A list of partner organizations engaged and the roles
- 2 of each partner in dissemination, including use of
- 3 co-branded toolkits and informational sessions;
- 4 (4) Progress measures, including baseline and follow-up
- 5 indicators for:
- 6 (A) Statewide and county-level public awareness of
- 7 the Hawaii emergency management agency's
- 8 fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation;
- 9 (B) Familiarity with emergency preparedness
- 10 guidelines; and
- 11 (C) Statewide and county-level estimates of household
- 12 preparedness and compliance relative to the
- 13 fourteen-day recommendation for water, food, and
- 14 medical supplies, including the share of
- 15 households meeting the fourteen-day threshold for
- 16 all essential supplies combined, to the extent
- 17 feasible;
- 18 (5) A summary of barriers to emergency preparedness
- 19 identified through evaluation activities and actions
- 20 taken to address those barriers;



1 (6) A description of how messaging and outreach were
2 targeted or tailored by county or audience segment,
3 including multilingual and accessibility measures, and
4 use of region-specific communications tools, if
5 implemented;

6 (7) Expenditures of any appropriated funds and any other
7 resources used to implement this part; and

8 (8) Recommendations for sustaining, improving, or
9 expanding the fourteen-day emergency preparedness
10 communications program.

11 (c) The Hawaii emergency management agency shall make the
12 report publicly available on its website no later than ten
13 business days after submission to the legislature.

14 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
16 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to
17 implement this part, including planning, community engagement,
18 production of media assets, translation and accessibility
19 services, evaluation, and outreach distribution costs.

20 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii
21 emergency management agency for the purposes of this part.



PART II

SECTION 5. The purpose of this part is to:

- (1) Require the governor or mayor of a county to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official announcement broadcast via television or the Internet during a state of emergency;
- (2) Require the governor or mayor of a county to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast; and
- (3) Require the governor or mayor of a county to provide a standardized pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of the primary video and large enough to clearly see the interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands.

SECTION 6. Chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§127A-B Official announcements; proclamations; emergencies; American Sign Language interpreter; display;



1 requirements; picture-in-picture required. (a) Beginning
 2 July 1, 2027, whenever the governor or mayor, as applicable,
 3 makes a proclamation pursuant to this chapter, the governor or
 4 mayor shall provide an American Sign Language interpreter who is
 5 certified by a nationally or state recognized credentialing
 6 authority at each live broadcast press conference during the
 7 state of emergency. To the greatest extent possible, the
 8 governor or mayor shall ensure that the American Sign Language
 9 interpreter is physically positioned in a manner so that the
 10 interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are always visible
 11 during each live broadcast of the press conference.

12 (b) The governor or mayor, as applicable, shall provide a
 13 primary pool feed for any live official announcement that
 14 includes an American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-
 15 picture window. A broadcaster that rebroadcasts the official
 16 announcement shall not be required to independently generate or
 17 insert this accessibility feature."

PART III

19 SECTION 7. The legislature finds that Hawaii's foreign-
 20 born population numbers approximately two hundred sixty thousand
 21 and makes up eighteen per cent of the State's total population,



1 which is higher than the fourteen per cent of the population of
2 the United States that is foreign-born. Immigrants to Hawaii
3 arrive from many countries, including China, Japan, Korea,
4 Mexico, Vietnam, and the Philippines, and contribute billions of
5 dollars to the State's economic output by paying taxes,
6 establishing new businesses, and staffing essential jobs.
7 However, many immigrants are paid below poverty rates and lack
8 access to social benefits.

9 The legislature further finds that around twenty-five per
10 cent of the State's population speak a language other than
11 English at home and over ten per cent have limited English
12 proficiency. Among these other languages are Ilokano, Tagalog,
13 Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Samoan, Tongan, and Micronesian
14 languages, including Pohnpeian, Marshallese, and Chuukese.
15 Without access to services and resources in these languages,
16 many residents of Hawaii face significant barriers to
17 participation in the community.

18 The legislature further finds that the Hawaii emergency
19 management agency has one language coordinator and needs
20 additional bilingual resources to communicate with residents
21 with limited English proficiency, especially during emergencies.



1 Additionally, bilingual resources are essential for the state to
2 comply with federal and state mandates, such as the Civil Rights
3 Act of 1964 and Presidential Executive Order 13166 of August 11,
4 2000, to provide language access as a condition to receive
5 grants, contracts, and other partnerships. In 2006, the State
6 established the Office of Language Access to affirm its
7 commitment to civil rights and comprehensive access to services
8 regardless of national origin.

9 Accordingly, the purpose of this part is to provide the
10 Hawaii emergency management agency with resources to meet the
11 language access needs of residents with limited English
12 proficiency and reaffirm its commitment to civil rights. These
13 resources will increase the Hawaii emergency management agency's
14 capacity to serve immigrants and other residents with limited
15 English proficiency by providing bilingual resources and
16 services.

17 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
20 the Hawaii emergency management agency to expand access to
21 bilingual resources and services.



Report Title:

HIEMA; Emergency Preparedness; Emergency Communications; Limited English Proficiency; Language Access; Official Announcements; American Sign Language; Sign Language Interpreter; Program; Reports; Appropriations

Description:

Requires the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's 14-day essential supplies recommendation. Requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official live broadcast during a state of emergency. Requires the Governor or mayor of a county to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast. Requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide a primary pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window. Requires reports to the Legislature prior to the Regular Sessions of 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

