
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 (HIEMA) 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 HIEMA's updated fourteen-day recommendation and
14 households that are familiar with general preparedness
15 guidelines are more likely to be prepared and to comply with
16 recommended stockpiling for water, food, and medical supplies.

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



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

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

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

18 **"§127A-A Fourteen-day emergency preparedness**
19 **communications program.** (a) The agency shall develop and
20 implement by July 1, 2027, a statewide public education and
21 communications program to increase household preparedness



1 consistent with the agency's fourteen-day essential supplies
2 recommendation for food, water, and regularly used medications.

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

7 (1) Identify priority audiences, with attention to
8 populations disproportionately impacted by disasters,
9 including but not limited to households with low
10 incomes, kupuna, persons with disabilities or access
11 and functional needs, medically vulnerable
12 individuals, and communities with limited English
13 proficiency;

14 (2) Provide clear, actionable guidance on how households
15 can build and maintain a fourteen-day supply through
16 phased and affordable steps, including messaging that
17 supports dignity, practicality, and realistic
18 household budgeting, and that addresses commonly
19 reported barriers including limited storage space and
20 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 operationalize a statewide multi-media
6 dissemination strategy, including television, internet
7 news sites, social media platforms, local radio, and
8 mobile-based communications, and tailor channel
9 emphasis to documented age-group preferences;
- 10 (5) Establish a coordinated dissemination schedule for
11 year-round outreach and targeted outreach during
12 seasonal risk periods;
- 13 (6) Strengthen and expand practical information pathways
14 for preparedness guidance, including:
 - 15 (A) Maintaining and promoting updated preparedness
16 content on the agency's website;
 - 17 (B) Increasing enrollment in emergency information
18 updates and alerts;
 - 19 (C) Equipping state and county agencies and community
20 partners with co-branded toolkits to support
21 diffusion through trusted community ties; and



- 1 (D) Incorporating in-person or virtual informational
2 meetings as appropriate for priority audiences;
3 and
- 4 (7) Include an evaluation framework with measurable
5 outcomes, including baseline and follow-up measures
6 of:
- 7 (A) Public awareness of the agency's fourteen-day
8 recommendation;
- 9 (B) Familiarity with emergency preparedness
10 guidelines; and
- 11 (C) The share of households meeting the fourteen-day
12 readiness threshold for water, food, and medical
13 supplies, including the share meeting the
14 threshold for all essential supplies combined, to
15 the extent feasible.
- 16 (c) Media assets developed under this section may include
17 but shall not be limited to:
- 18 (1) Public service announcements for radio, television,
19 and digital platforms;
- 20 (2) Print-ready and digital graphics, fact sheets,
21 checklists, and household planning templates;



- 1 (3) A fourteen-day readiness social media and partner
2 communications toolkit for organizations and agencies;
- 3 (4) Short instructional videos and multilingual audio
4 content; and
- 5 (5) Templates that counties, community partners, and state
6 agencies may co-brand for consistent statewide
7 messaging.
- 8 (d) The agency may consult and coordinate with relevant
9 state and county agencies and community partners to implement
10 this section, including but not limited to the department of
11 health; The department of education; The department of human
12 services; The office of Hawaiian affairs; and county emergency
13 management agencies, as appropriate.
- 14 (e) The agency shall incorporate targeted communications
15 that emphasize region-specific emergency preparedness
16 recommendations and community-based practices, and may implement
17 multimedia communications and georeferenced maps to attract
18 public attention to the urgent need for households to adhere to
19 the agency's fourteen-day recommendations; provided that
20 outreach should include multilingual strategies and



1 community-based information sessions appropriate for the State's
2 diverse populations."

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

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

- 9 (1) The comprehensive communications plan developed
10 pursuant to section 127A-A(b), Hawaii Revised
11 Statutes, including any updates made during the
12 reporting period;
- 13 (2) A summary of media assets produced and dissemination
14 activities conducted, including the channels used and
15 the frequency and timing of dissemination;
- 16 (3) A list of partner organizations engaged and the roles
17 of each partner in dissemination, including use of
18 co-branded toolkits and informational sessions;
- 19 (4) Progress measures, including baseline and follow-up
20 indicators for:



- 1 (A) Statewide and county-level public awareness of
- 2 the Hawaii emergency management agency's
- 3 fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation;
- 4 (B) Familiarity with emergency preparedness
- 5 guidelines; and
- 6 (C) Statewide and county-level estimates of household
- 7 preparedness and compliance relative to the
- 8 fourteen-day recommendation for water, food, and
- 9 medical supplies, including the share meeting the
- 10 fourteen-day threshold for all essential supplies
- 11 combined, to the extent feasible;
- 12 (5) A summary of barriers to emergency preparedness
- 13 identified through evaluation activities and actions
- 14 taken to address those barriers;
- 15 (6) A description of how messaging and outreach were
- 16 targeted or tailored by county or audience segment,
- 17 including multilingual and accessibility measures, and
- 18 use of region-specific communications tools, if
- 19 implemented;
- 20 (7) Expenditures of any appropriated funds and any other
- 21 resources used to implement this part; and



1 (8) Recommendations for sustaining, improving, or
2 expanding the fourteen-day emergency preparedness
3 communications program.

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

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

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

15 PART II

16 SECTION 5. The purpose of this part is to:

17 (1) Require the governor or mayor of a county to provide
18 an American Sign Language interpreter during each
19 official announcement broadcast via television or the
20 Internet during a state of emergency;



1 (2) Require the governor or mayor of a county to ensure,
2 to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign
3 Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are
4 visible during the broadcast; and

5 (3) Require the governor or mayor of a county to provide a
6 standardized pool feed that includes the American Sign
7 Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window
8 not less than one quarter the size of the primary
9 video and large enough to clearly see the
10 interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands.

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

14 **"§127A-B Official announcements; proclamations;**
15 **emergencies; American Sign Language interpreter; display;**
16 **requirements; picture-in-picture required.** (a) Beginning
17 July 1, 2027, whenever the governor or mayor, as applicable,
18 makes a proclamation pursuant to this chapter, the governor or
19 mayor shall provide an American Sign Language interpreter who is
20 certified by a nationally or state recognized credentialing
21 authority at each live broadcast press conference during the



1 state of emergency. To the greatest extent possible, the
2 governor or mayor shall ensure that the American Sign Language
3 interpreter is physically positioned in a manner so that the
4 interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are always visible
5 during a television or internet broadcast of the press
6 conference.

7 (b) The governor or mayor, as applicable, shall provide a
8 standardized pool feed for any live official announcement that
9 includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a
10 picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of
11 the primary video and large enough to clearly see the
12 interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands. The interpreter
13 shall not be blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other
14 on-screen text; provided that the captions, graphics, or other
15 on-screen text shall be repositioned as necessary. A
16 broadcaster that rebroadcasts the official announcement shall
17 not be required to independently generate or insert this
18 accessibility feature."

19 PART III

20 SECTION 7. The legislature finds that the foreign-born
21 population in Hawaii is two hundred sixty thousand and makes up



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

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

19 The legislature further finds that the Hawaii emergency
20 management agency has one language coordinator and needs
21 additional bilingual resources to communicate with residents



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

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

18 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
20 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for



1 the Hawaii emergency management agency to expand access to
2 bilingual resources and services.

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

5 PART IV

6 SECTION 9. In codifying the new sections added by
7 sections 2 and 6 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall
8 substitute appropriate section numbers for the letters used in
9 designating the new sections in this Act.

10 SECTION 10. New statutory material is underscored.

11 SECTION 11. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



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 announcement broadcast via television or the Internet 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 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 not blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other on-screen text. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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