



Courtesy Tyler Kruse

From the governor: Staying vigilant in hurricane season

Yes, the hurricanes and tropical storms keep coming. Although it's easy to succumb to "hurricane fatigue," the message from Governor Ige and emergency responders is "Stay vigilant. We have to keep working together." In the face of multiple natural disasters, the state's coordinated response has drawn widespread praise from the community, but don't forget: Hurricane season lasts through November. This issue of Capitol Connection talks about lessons learned at the county, state and federal levels and what we can do to build more resilient communities — especially for the challenges of climate change.

Q. What do you want people to know about the state's readiness since we're still in hurricane season?

A. It's definitely a team effort at all levels for us to prepare, keep people safe and restore life to normal as quickly as possible. **Hurricane Lane** and **Tropical Storm Olivia** showed county, state and federal workers were ready to respond to critical needs. We're looking at ways to reach communities that could be isolated by flash floods and landslides, especially if harbors are shut down and aircraft are grounded. If an event shuts down a highway, we would have to find other, little-used access points to get people in and out. Since the April floods and the Kīlauea eruption, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has been very supportive in prepositioning supplies — food, water, medical supplies, emergency generators — in every county. They recognize that Hawai'i's isolation means we don't have multiple ways of getting things to the islands. My requests for presidential disaster declarations have given us access to federal resources, and a joint task force ensured the National Guard and active duty military could work together on all the islands.



Gov. Ige thanks FEMA workers for helping the state in its disaster recovery.

Q. Why was it important to have both government and private sector partners at the hurricane press conferences?

A. Often when we're preparing to respond to a natural disaster, the public doesn't see how many people from all sectors are involved. I thought it was important for the community to hear directly from the utilities, shippers, airlines, emergency healthcare, the Hawai'i Tourism Authority as well as the National Weather Service, FEMA and the military. We thought we should let the public see and hear from the people actually doing the work and developing contingency plans.

Q. What more can families and communities do to be prepared?

A. We believe it begins with a whole "culture of preparedness" for every island. I encourage everyone to stay vigilant and keep their hurricane kits stocked with 14 days of food and water, have a family emergency communication plan and reach out to friends and neighbors. We're also encouraging whole communities to be certified for resiliency by the **Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA)** through its Hawaii Hazards Awareness and Resilience Program — identifying health services, key resources and community members who can take the lead in an emergency. (For more details, go to dod.hawaii.gov/hiema/resources/hharp.)

Q. Why was your participation in the recent Global Climate Action Summit so important?

A. The summit was the latest effort of the **U.S. Climate Alliance**, a bipartisan coalition of 17 governors like myself who recognize that climate change is real. I described our challenges dealing with hurricanes and sea level rise and Hawai'i's leadership in slowing down global warming. We want to be part of a bigger national market where businesses are looking for "clean" carbon credit projects to support our state's Sustainable Hawai'i Initiative and have committed to taking action to protect our planet (See story Page 2).

Hawai'i makes its mark at Global Climate Action Summit

Real people in real communities dealing with the real effects of climate change. That describes life in Hawai'i as we face hurricanes, king tides and the reality of sea level rise. Governor Ige and other environmental leaders from Hawai'i joined scores of national and international representatives at the **Global Climate Action Summit** in San Francisco last month to work toward the goals of the Paris Climate Accord.



Gov. Ige describes new U.S. Climate Alliance initiatives; Hawai'i's delegation pauses for a photo opp local style.

The summit reaffirmed the environmental leadership of the U.S. Climate Alliance, a bipartisan group of 17 governors — including Governor Ige — working together to reduce global warming. The Alliance was formed after President Trump withdrew from the Paris agreement. “Hawai'i and the Alliance are showing the nation and the world that ambitious climate action is achievable,” the governor said. “Our state is committed to 100 percent renewable electricity. We're establishing a carbon offset program to invest in our native forest watersheds. And this year, I signed legislation committing to carbon neutrality by 2045. We're working together for a clean, renewable future with an integrated electricity and transportation system.”

One of the pacts signed by Governor Ige involved the Under2 Coalition, a group of more than 200 governments committed to keeping global temperature rises under 2 degrees Celsius. Hawai'i also joined with other partners to address the impacts of ocean acidification. In addition, the state committed to sustainable management of climate-resilient landscapes and to increased carbon sequestration. This involves capturing CO₂ through reforestation, planting native trees, and other land-based solutions. Said the U.S. Climate Alliance, “This commitment builds international confidence that U.S. states can achieve greenhouse gas reductions regardless of inaction at the federal level.”



Gov. Ige with captain Lehua Kamalu after Hikianalia's 2,800-mile voyage.

The week culminated in an emotional, symbolic welcome for **Hikianalia captain Lehua Kamalu and her crew** when Hōkūle'a's sister canoe arrived in San Francisco with its own message of caring for island Earth. The crew completed the 2,800-mile journey from Hawai'i to California as part of the Polynesian Voyaging Society's global **Mālama Honua** campaign.

Statewide pride and a parade for Little League champs

Even with the threat of Tropical Storm Olivia, crowds still turned out for a Sept. 8 parade in downtown Honolulu to honor **Hawai'i's Little League World Series Champions**. It was a morning of autographs, picture taking and speeches to celebrate the young team that has captured the hearts of people across the state and the nation.



Governor Ige, Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell and other officials joined families, friends and classmates of the boys, who drew cheers as they rode a bright red fire truck to the steps of Honolulu Hale. The governor thanked the team for being “ambassadors of aloha” and for being “the inspiration for all of us in the islands.” Mayor Caldwell praised them for their hard work and focus, saying, “They kept their eyes on the prize and worked as a team, supporting each other.”



The Little League world champs gather with Gov. Ige, Mayor Kirk Caldwell and fans. Team members wave to the crowds on their way to a celebration at Honolulu Hale.



Gov. Ige and team manager Gerald Oda.

Amid the crush of fans stood team manager Gerald Oda, who has drawn praise of his own for teaching the boys life lessons of respect and humility on and off the field. After the ceremony, he said, smiling, “I'm so happy to see the crowds today and want to thank everyone in the state. We're really feeling the love. We did it for the people of Hawai'i.”

Ige administration praised for hurricane response

There's no rest for the hurricane-weary. Even as some Hawai'i residents are still recovering from **Hurricane Lane** and **Tropical Storm Olivia**, more storms are predicted through the end of November. The state's string of natural disasters — from the April floods to the Kīlauea eruption to the named hurricanes — has proven one thing: Teamwork at all levels is making the difference when a real-time crisis hits.

The state's rapid, coordinated response under Governor Ige has earned repeated praise from the community. One resident on Facebook wrote, "Super-impressed with the coordination of emergency response among all the agencies and the private sector. The mayors did a great job, too. Thanks for keeping us safe."

While the rest of us hunker down when hurricanes threaten, state, county, federal workers and the military spring into action on multiple fronts. In the case of both Lane and Olivia, the governor's speedy requests for presidential disaster declarations provided valuable access to federal resources. A Joint Task Force 5-0, led by Brig. Gen. Kenneth Hara, ensured the National Guard and active duty military could work together on several islands.

For Tropical Storm Olivia, the governor said he felt it was important to sign his emergency proclamation before the hurricane made landfall. "We wanted to make sure that we could preposition assets, equipment and personnel ahead of the storm. It's not only the wind impact; it's rain and flooding, as we saw with Lane."

For both recent storms, Governor Ige held multiple news briefings to update the public. He called in representatives from the National Weather Service, FEMA, the utilities, shipping, the airlines, emergency healthcare and the Hawai'i Tourism Authority to answer questions. In a Honolulu Civil Beat story, a Young Brothers operations director said, "I've never seen that level of cooperation — everyone's coordinating, everyone's talking. The state and the counties — it's probably the best they've ever handled an emergency response."

At an Aug. 30 news conference with Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen and FEMA administrator Brock Long, the governor praised the ongoing partnership with local officials in providing lifelines to supplies and resources when they were needed most. "I've never seen so many FEMA personnel in every county, to provide expertise, support, advice and access to resources," said the governor. "They've been true partners, and we've established a very strong relationship over the past four months. They have executed their mission tirelessly and with great compassion."

Long said FEMA is striving for a "culture of preparedness" that is "locally executed, state managed and federally supported." He emphasized that it's not just a government solution, but incorporating the private sector and the whole community. "We've got to stop looking at citizens as survivors only and how to tap into citizens as part of the solution," he said. Nielsen added, "I ask the citizens of Hawai'i to visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) to learn about life-saving training and other ways they can protect their families and communities should a disaster occur. We look forward to standing shoulder to shoulder with our local partners as recovery continues."

Are we prepared for the threat of more storms? Governor Ige replied emphatically, "We'll continue to be partners in keeping the community safe 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year because that's our collective commitment and our collective responsibility."



ALL HANDS ON DECK: (far left) Public and private sector leaders gather at HI-EMA to provide news updates on Hurricane Lane.

DOE Superintendent Christina Kishimoto, school officials, Gov. Ige and Hawai'i island legislators visit Wai-akea Elementary to inspect flood damage.

At last, a modern state payroll system to improve services

The mountains of paperwork . . . the armies of clerks manually entering salary numbers for every pay period. For the past 50 years, thousands of state employees from every department have depended on an antiquated paper-based process to be paid. The good news: The system has been transformed since Governor Ige made modernizing the core operations of state government one of his top priorities to improve services.

It's taken a dedicated team of state employees — the **Hawai'i Pay Team** — to transform the state's massive payroll system from a hugely labor-intensive process to a new computer-based, "best practice" operation, using an automated clearinghouse (ACH) for electronic deposit to financial institutions anywhere in the U.S.



Why now after all these years? "These kinds of transitions are hard to do," said Governor Ige. "It literally impacts every single person in state government. It's a high-risk undertaking because if I make an error with your pay, it's easy for you to get angry. It's easier to say 'Just leave it alone.'"

So why did this administration decide to take the risk? "Because these core systems impact our ability to deliver services," explained the governor. "Modernizing these systems allows us to be more effective so we can deliver better services to the community for the tax dollars we collect. As we implement these successful projects, we can inspire people to make other changes to improve services." Added DAGS director and state comptroller Rod Becker, "The success of the new system is a credit to the countless state employees, employee organizations, and other agencies that have partnered on this project."

So far, two groups totaling 23,000 employees have successfully transitioned to the modernized system. Group 3, consisting of about 55,000 employees from the Department of Education and the University of Hawai'i system will transition in December. The project is being implemented by the Department of Accounting and General Services in coordination with the Office of Enterprise Technology Services and CherryRoad Technologies, Inc.

Under the new system, employees will be able to manage their payroll information online and taxpayers will benefit from the savings in efficiencies and better use of government resources for improved services. A modernized state system will also help with recruitment of a new generation of employees, say state officials. "I see it as a way to recruit younger people into the state workforce," said Budget and Finance Director Laurel Johnston. "We have to use technology. We can't recruit younger people, then hand them a stack of paper and say, 'Here, you have to process this one sheet at a time.'"

'Code Challenge' to launch Oct.20

Attention, all computer programmers, software developers and tech innovators who want to improve state government: The next **Hawai'i Annual Code Challenge (HACC)** kicks off Saturday, Oct. 20 at 9 a.m. at the East-West Center. The event is open to students, amateurs and professionals with the most outstanding solutions eligible for cash prizes and consideration for implementation by the state.

At the kick-off, state departments will present day-to-day issues that could benefit from better coding solutions. Teams will then have three weeks to develop applications, which they will present Nov. 10 to a panel of judges. During the development phase, two workshops will also be held to help teams devise their solutions. The competition, conceived by Governor Ige, is coordinated by the Office of Enterprise Technology Services. To enter, visit hacc.hawaii.gov.

Who owns this land? New DLNR website has some answers

A new tool available for the first time to anyone who wants to know about state- and county-owned lands in Hawai'i was launched recently by the state Department of Land and Natural Resources. Called the **Public Land Trust Information System (PLTIS)**, the centralized, web-based inventory can be found at <https://pltis.hawaii.gov>.

DLNR director Suzanne Case said the governor directed her department to develop PLTIS as part of the Ige administration's commitment to more open government. "Combining all of this disparate data into one easily accessible database was a monumental undertaking," she said. "I'm thrilled this is now available to everyone, and my thanks to the DLNR Land Division for all the hard work that made it happen."

Contact us at governor.hawaii.gov
Executive Chambers, State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 586-0034 | Fax: (808) 586-0006

Hilo Office (808) 974-6262 | Kona Office (808) 323-4542 |
Maui Office (808) 243-5798 | Kaua'i Office (808) 274-3100

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