

# Businesses need to be prepared for hurricane season

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



**F**riday will mark the start of hurricane season, which will run through November. Is your business prepared?

Last week, the state Civil Defense held Makani Pahili, the annual statewide exercise to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. In this exercise, the state Civil

Defense and the National Weather Service developed a scenario, hurricane track and damage report, and disseminated this information to participating agencies throughout the state through their normal procedures.

The exercise began with a video-teleconference briefing from the National Weather Service and the state Civil Defense in which they provided the initial storm track and forecast for the rest of the week. The exercise then included daily briefings on the progression of the mock storm.

Maui's Civil Defense Agency participated by tracking the storm

using HurrEvac software; practicing alert, warning and notification; and exercising various checklists. The staff brought together numerous county departments and agencies to participate in this exercise, including the Maui Chamber of Commerce, which allowed each participating agency or department to test its own hurricane plans and evaluate their effectiveness. Participants looked at what they would do pre-landfall and during the impact, and then at the post-hurricane response and recovery.

In the exercise scenario, while the storm did not pass directly over Maui, the impacts of the high winds and heavy rains would have caused major damage to infrastructure, transportation, housing and businesses, with economic impacts that would have taken months and even years to fully recover.

It was a wonderful exercise to be a part of because it allowed the

chamber to review its internal plan, as well as look at how the organization could best educate, inform and assist its members in the event of a hurricane.

To date, a basic four-step plan has evolved.

First, Chamber staff members need to ensure that we are prepared in the event of a hurricane, starting with each employee having a disaster preparedness kit. These kits easily can be built or purchased. Employees need to be prepared at home and take care of their families before they can assist their organization or business. Therefore, we recommend that each business talk with its employees about disaster preparedness and encourage them to have a kit readily available. Creating disaster preparedness kits also can be a fun exercise at the office, with great rewards.

Second, we discussed how we would operate in the event of a hurricane, noting essential em-

ployees and tasks, critical services that must be maintained, how we would accomplish those responsibilities with duties assigned to each employee, the resources needed to do so, how we would communicate, and how we would deal with financial matters.

Third, we looked at systems for disseminating information among our team members and to our membership of more than 900 businesses. General preparedness information will be placed on our Web site, such as links to Web sites on how to create a disaster-preparedness kit or plan to aid in pre-disaster preparedness. E-mail notifications will be sent to keep members informed of potential hurricanes and hurricane progressions, and to provide key information. If needed, phone trees will be utilized to get critical information out.

Fourth, we considered what our role would be after a hurri-

cane. We feel the Maui Chamber of Commerce can help disseminate information, and mobilize volunteers and resources to assist in repairing and rebuilding businesses and meeting our community's post-disaster needs.

This is just a quick overview of our initial plan. We consider it a "work in progress."

Do you have a plan in place? Preparedness counts. While the government will do what it can to help, it will be focused on meeting the most critical needs. So, be ready, help your employees prepare, and have a plan in place. The more each individual, family and business is prepared, the better off our community will be.

For quick links to disaster preparedness information, please visit the Maui Chamber of Commerce Web site at [www.mauichamber.com](http://www.mauichamber.com).

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*