


**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO**  
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OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF OPERATIONS

February 8, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable Ken Kuraya  
Chairperson, Finance and Infrastructure Committee

**FROM:** Curt T. Otaguro   
Deputy Superintendent of Operations

**SUBJECT:** Update on Department Actions and Updates in Response to the Final Report of the House of Representatives Lahaina Wildfire Interim Working Groups

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Hawaii House of Representatives established six interim working groups to examine certain topics related to the Maui wildfires and made recommendations for appropriate legislative action to be addressed in the 2024 Legislative session.

The Schools Working Group, along with the five other working groups, came up with a total of 33 findings in the report. While all findings are not applicable to the Hawaii State Department of Education (Department), we are addressing the ones that are.

2. DESCRIPTION

In the aftermath of the Maui wildfires, the Speaker of the House of Representatives established six interim working groups to evaluate multiple issues related to the wildfire, analyze information, and make recommendations for possible legislative action in the 2024 Legislative session. The six interim working groups are:

- Environmental Remediation Working Group
- Food, Water and Other Supplies Working Group
- Jobs and Business Working Group
- Schools Working Group
- Shelter Working Group
- Wildfire Prevention Working Group

These groups worked with federal, state, and county agencies as well as community stakeholders to identify the issues in the report.

The purpose of the Environmental Remediation Working Group was to evaluate the cleanup of ground and ocean contamination, including the timeframe and techniques utilized, and to prepare recommendations for appropriate legislative action.

The purpose of the Food, Water and Other Supplies Working Group was to evaluate the availability and distribution of food and other necessary supplies for displaced individuals and families, and to prepare recommendations for appropriate legislative action.

The purpose of the Jobs and Business Working Group was to evaluate the Maui unemployment rate and the approaches to restart business activity as well as the impacts to tourism statewide, and to prepare recommendations for appropriate legislative action.

The purpose of the Schools Working Group was to evaluate the strategies utilized to accommodate displaced students and staff to return to school, and to prepare recommendations for appropriate legislative action.

The purpose of the Shelter Working Group was to evaluate the availability and creation of temporary and transitional shelters for displaced individuals and families, and to prepare recommendations for appropriate legislative action.

The purpose of the Wildfire Prevention Working Group was to identify the causes of wildfires and preventative action that may be taken to reduce the risk of wildfires throughout the State and prepare recommendations for appropriate legislative action.

### 3. UPDATE

Of the 33 findings in the report, the Department has addressed or is addressing all of the items that are appropriate for Department action.

#### **Environmental Remediation Working Group**

*Finding – Monitoring for Environmental Contamination*

*Finding – Debris Removal and Disposal*

The Department's Office of Facilities and Operations (OFO) Environmental Services Unit (ESU) continues to work closely with the County of Maui, the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the correct measures to sample, test, analyze, and monitor all air, water, and soil issues to ensure the safe return to the Lahaina schools. The ESU continues to monitor the air quality as debris removal has commenced in Lahaina town.

#### **Food, Water and Other Supplies Working Group**

*Finding – Hot Food Donations Standards Outreach*

For any food donations distributed to students on behalf of the Department, the OFO's School Food Services Branch ensured that all food storage, handling, and distribution followed all DOH processes and procedures.

### **Jobs and Business Working Group**

#### *Finding – Child Care Services Availability*

The OFO continues to work with the Lieutenant Governor's Office, the Office of Early Learning, and the School Facilities Authority to expand and establish pre-kindergarten classrooms in West Maui.

### **Schools Working Group**

#### *Finding – Need for School Evacuation Plans*

In September 2023, the OFO's Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Branch (SSEPB) updated the Lahaina schools plans to reflect wildfire threat response action guidelines which include updated evacuation routes. The SSEPB continues to review and reevaluate the remainder of schools' action plans to ensure they are up to date.

#### *Finding – Potential Health Hazards at School Sites; Monitoring Systems*

The OFO's ESU worked with the County of Maui, DOH, and EPA on procedures to collect air, soil, and water samples for testing and analysis to ensure school sites were safe for reopening and operations. The ESU obtained clearance from the applicable agencies and continues to work with them on the appropriate monitoring to ensure students, teachers, and staff remain safe while at school.

#### *Finding – Federal Hazard Mitigation Funding Opportunities for Schools*

The OFO is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance and Mitigation teams to inspect affected facilities and plan on how to best reinforce structures to better address any future disasters.

#### *Finding – Building and Rebuilding Resilient Schools*

The OFO's facilities branches are researching industries best practices as well as working with FEMA's Mitigation team on how to better incorporate standards and update specifications related to fire resilience.

#### *Finding – Funding Support for Schools*

The OFO is working with FEMA, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, and the State of Hawaii Department of Accounting and General Services Risk Management office to ensure the Department is following the necessary procedures to receive both federal reimbursement and state insurance funds to cover expenses incurred during the wildfire recovery.

The Honorable Ken Kuraya  
February 8, 2024  
Page 4

**Wildfire Prevention Working Group**

*Finding – Current Challenges to Wildfire Prevention and Response*

The OFO is currently tracking proposed legislation to provide resources to better prepare and protect state facilities from future wildfires. Any additional resources will help in mitigation efforts.

The Department continues to work with all of its federal, state, and local partners to address all issues and needs related to the Maui wildfires. Through this coordination and cooperation, the Department strives to address all applicable findings in the House of Representatives report. Please refer to the attachment for additional details on the Department's efforts as it led the recovery to support its students, teachers, staff, and community. The Department appreciates all the hard work and efforts of the working groups.

CTO:to  
Attachment

c: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent  
Audrey Hidano, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of Facilities and Operations