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Healthcare System Tests Disaster Preparedness in Statewide Makani Pahili Exercise

Honolulu –More than 80 healthcare organizations across Hawaii will test their emergency operation plans and level of preparedness during the Makani Pahili Hurricane exercise coordinated by the Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) Emergency Services Coalition on June 15 and June 20th. The Coalition oversees the Emergency Management Program for the healthcare system statewide.

The exercise is offered every year, with scenarios rotating to test various hazards or risks. It allows hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, community health centers, hospices, home care organizations, dialysis providers, the Blood Bank of Hawaii, pharmaceutical providers, and ambulatory care providers to test their emergency readiness.

This year the healthcare organizations will face a fictional strong tropical cyclone – such as a tropical storm or hurricane - that travels across the main islands over five days, and they must show how they will respond following the impact of the storm. On the second day of the exercise, the Coalition and one of the long term care facilities will conduct an evacuation drill to relocate half of the simulated patients (mannequins) to a staging area for transport.

“The Makani Pahili hurricane exercise is important because it allows all of our healthcare organizations and healthcare support organizations to evaluate their hurricane plans, as well as the Coalition’s. The exercise will test their disaster plans, exposing both strengths and weaknesses. This enables the Coalition members to make adjustments and be ready before an actual disaster occurs,” said Chris Crabtree, DrPH, CEM, director of the Coalition.

Hawaii is far from mainland aid, so the healthcare Coalition and the other healthcare organizations must be prepared to manage facilities and services for at least several days without outside help in the wake of a tropical cyclone, Crabtree said.

They should be prepared to handle power outages, water and food supply interruptions, building damage, and many other challenges. The choice of tropical cyclone is timely, since June heralds the start of the hurricane season, and the Central Pacific Hurricane Center projects that this year’s season will be an active one, with a projected five to eight cyclones.

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