



CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & CONSUMER AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF CONSUMER ADVOCACY (DCA)



Executive Director's Message

By: Michael S. Angelo



As we step into October, we do so with heavy hearts, reflecting on the devastating wildfire that swept through Maui. Our thoughts are with the resilient community as we stand united in the face of this tragedy. Our October newsletter is dedicated to keeping you informed and safe. We focus this month on providing emergency preparedness and safety tips, information for how consumers impacted by the wildfires can receive support, highlight the recent disconnection suspension issued by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and identify the DCA's efforts to seek additional consumer protections.

In the spirit of the recent Lifeline Awareness Week, we share crucial information on how consumers affected by the wildfire can benefit from the extension of this program. Additionally, we bring you an update on the temporary suspension of the Hone Heke rate increase request, recognizing the unique challenges facing Maui. We also provide information on utility assistance programs and resources where those affected by the wildfire can look to for relief. Finally, we share that Hawaiian Electric's (HECO) Shift and Save program was to begin this month. However, due to unforeseen circumstances arising from the Maui wildfires, the PUC suspended the commencement of the program.

Let us step into October with confidence and security in our ability to move forward in our commitment to a stronger and more resilient Hawaii.



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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: UTILITY SAFETY TIPS

Are you ready for the unexpected? Here are some essential tips to help you and your family stay safe during emergencies.

① **Power Outages:**  If the power goes out, unplug major appliances such as the stove and microwave to help prevent fires.

② **Water Disruptions:**  Conserve water for essential use. Fill containers with water for drinking and sanitation purposes.

③ **Gas Leaks:**  If you smell gas or suspect a leak, leave the area immediately and call the gas company. Don't turn on or off any electrical switches and avoid using open flames.



The DCA calls for Additional Consumer Protections and Utility Assessment

On August 31st, 2023, the PUC issued Order No. 40218, which mandates the suspension of service terminations or disconnections due to non-payment and the assessment of certain charges for all regulated electric, gas, telecommunication, water, and wastewater utilities on Maui. The order is effective from August 8, 2023, through October 17, 2023. The PUC also encouraged affected Maui utilities to actively seek available assistance avenues. The DCA greatly appreciates the actions undertaken by the PUC through Order No. 40218.

We also remain unwavering in our advocacy for ratepayers affected by the wildfires and have proposed additional protections for ratepayers to the PUC. Among our recommendations is the notion that ratepayers should not be burdened with utility bills if they can no longer receive utility services due to fire damage. For more details on DCA's recommendations to the PUC on the billing protections we proposed for customers impacted by the Maui wildfires, please refer to our website.

➔ <https://cca.hawaii.gov/dca/ratepayer-protection/>

Additionally, we recommended that proceedings be initiated to assess Hawaii's regulated utility systems' vulnerability to natural disasters and man-made threats so that protective actions can be identified and implemented to bolster the resilience of our utility systems to those vulnerabilities. The DCA also seeks to have the results of the ongoing wildfire investigations incorporated into that proceeding so that any actions that may be needed to address wildfire risk can be quickly undertaken. Further information on DCA's emphasis on assessing utility system vulnerabilities and identifying risk mitigation strategies can be found on our website

➔ <https://cca.hawaii.gov/dca/utility-assessment/>

Important Update on Expeditions' (Hone Heke's) rate increase request

We also have an important update on Expeditions' (Hone Heke's) recent rate increase request in Docket No. 2023-0203 and its ferry service operations between Maui and Lanai. In light of the ongoing situation and immediate priorities connected to the Maui wildfires, the requested rate increase has been temporarily put on hold. Expeditions ferry service on Maui is now operating from Maalaea with the schedule found here <https://go-lanai.com/>

We sincerely appreciate your understanding and patience as we navigate through these challenging times together. We will provide timely updates on these issues as more information becomes available.

Lifeline Awareness Week: Connect, Communicate and Support

From September 11th to September 15th, it was Lifeline Awareness Week. This program offers crucial telecommunications support to low-income individuals and families, including those affected by the Maui wildfires.

What's Lifeline?

Lifeline provides a monthly discount on telephone or broadband service for eligible consumers, ensuring they stay connected when they need it the most.

A lifeline for Maui Wildfire Survivors

In response to the Maui wildfires, Lifeline eligibility now extends to those participating in the Federal Emergency Management Area (FEMA) Individuals and Households Program (IHP).

How to Apply

Explore Lifeline today to see if you qualify for this valuable assistance. It's more than a lifeline; it's a lifeline of communication and connection.



Visit

www.truconnect.com/lifeline
for more information

Important Update: Shift and Save Pilot Program Postponed



Hawaiian Electric (HECO) has made a significant update regarding the Shift and Save pilot program. The program was set to begin in October, involving approximately 17,000 residential and business customers on Oahu, Hawaii Island, and Maui. However, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has ordered a postponement, and some important changes have been made. Here's what you need to know:

What's New?



- **Revised Start Date:** The program for Oahu and Hawaii Island customers will now begin on February 1, 2024, instead of October 1, 2023.
- **Maui Suspension:** The program's start on Maui has been temporarily suspended. However, eligible Maui customers can still opt into TOU rates voluntarily.

Purpose: Shift and Save encourages customers to use electricity during daylight hours when solar energy is abundant and cheaper reducing reliance on fossil fuels.



Why the Change?

- **Community Input:** The change follows a request from Maui's mayor due to recent wildfires. It allows Hawaiian Electric to focus on the emergency and conduct a more informed study.
- **Informed Study:** HECO believes that this revised schedule will allow them to allocate necessary resources to address the ongoing Maui emergency and, at the same time, conduct a more informed study that benefits all customers.



What Remains Unchanged?

- **Purpose:** The primary purpose of the program remains the same, to collect data and customer feedback which will be crucial for the PUC to determine how and whether this program should be implemented for all customers in the future.
- **Customer Choice:** Customers who were initially selected for the pilot program can still choose whether or not to participate

To stay updated on the latest developments regarding the Shift and Save program, please visit the official HECO website

→ www.hawaiianelectric.com/products-and-services/save-energy-and-money/shift-and-save. Your feedback and involvement are essential in shaping the future of energy in Hawaii.

DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR ELECTRICITY BILL?



LIHEAP

The Hawaii Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides heating and cooling to needy Hawaii households by assisting with one-time payments toward their utility bill (electric or gas) in two ways:

Energy Crisis Intervention (ECI) - assists households on the verge of utility termination
Energy Credit (EC) - assist residence with bill payment
(ENROLLMENT OPENS IN JUNE 2024)

AUW 2-1-1

Aloha United Way, 2-1-1 is a confidential, toll-free help hotline for anyone in Hawaii in need of help.

THE SALVATION ARMY - HAWAIIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDS

This program provides basic material assistance, short-term utility and rent, clothing, and food assistance, referral services, and budgeting/nutrition workshops.

Find additional programs and resources on our website.

SCAN ME





MAUI STRONG

The recent wildfire in Maui has deeply affected us all, reminding us of our shared strength as a community. While space is limited here, you can visit our website → cca.hawaii.gov/dca/mauirelief/ for the full list of financial assistance relief assistance programs for those affected by the fire.

- Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement Rent Relief Program www.hawaiiancouncil.org/dhhl-rent-relief-program/
- Catholic Charities Hawaii State Homeless Emergency Grants Program www.catholiccharitieshawaii.org/housing-assistance/
- Hawaii Association of Realtors Relief Foundation <https://bit.ly/3RzesjR>



- October 31st - Halloween (State offices will be open)
- November 11th - Veterans Day (State offices will be closed November 10th)
- November 23rd - Thanksgiving (State offices will be closed)

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cca.hawaii.gov/dca/

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