NATURAL DISASTER EVACUATION POLICIES AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELDERLY ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES
ON OAHU

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Abstract

After Hurricane Katrina, states, cities and counties re-examined their disaster preparedness plans. One area of neglect that was found in most of these plans concerned the elderly and those with special health needs and Hawaii was no exception. The only policy that exists in Hawaii for the evacuation of residents of assisted living facilities is in the Hawaii Administrative Rules in Title 11 Chapter 100-12. This policy states that it is the responsibility of the facility to evacuate the residents, not the government. Currently, the plan for the elderly in assisted living facilities is to shelter in place unless it is not possible. However, there is nowhere else for these citizens to evacuate to that can accommodate their needs. Agencies from all levels of government in Hawaii are designing a plan to incorporate these citizens by retrofitting an estimated 32 shelters to meet their special health needs, and by educating facilities on hardening and retrofitting their buildings. Unfortunately, these shelters will not be available for at least a decade and most retrofitting is quite expensive. This paper offers an alternative to these current plans for elderly preparedness during natural disasters. If the state were to mandate a consortium among the assisted living facilities, the common goal could be to protect the residents by allowing for cost sharing and providing sufficient sheltering before the public shelters are completed. The consortium would choose certain facilities dependent on size, location and physical integrity of the building to act as a hub during a natural disaster. All facilities would participate in cost sharing for supplying, retrofitting and hardening the hubs. The consortium could single handedly reduce over-crowding in shelters during a natural disaster and allow space for elderly not associated with a living facility.