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Pacific Media Group Kauaʻi
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Local Kauaʻi News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaʻi News – Tuesday March 1, 2022

Kauaʻi District Health Office announced 24 new cases of COVID-19 today, Tuesday, March 1. Today's cases bring the number of active cases to 73, with three hospitalized On our island. Kauaʻi has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date. Meanwhile, The state of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) reports 118 new coronavirus cases on today. The state death toll remains at 1,334.

On Tuesday, Mayor Derek S. K. Kawakami officially announced his plan to run for re-election. After being hit with several unforeseen disasters in his first term,- from floods and landslides to a global pandemic,” Kawakami says he is eager to move forward.

Mayor Derek S. K. Kawakami announced today that Emergency Rule 28 will be repealed effective March 1, ending the county's last emergency rule for COVID-19. Emergency Rule 28 limited social gatherings and required events over gathering limits to ensure attendees were either fully vaccinated or showed proof of a negative COVID test. Kauaʻi still remains under Governor David Ige's current Emergency Proclamation for COVID-19 which includes the indoor mask requirement, the state's Safe Travels program, and the vaccination/testing program for county employees.

On Sunday, first responders performed rescues at the Nounou East Trail in Wailua and Kalalau Trail in Hanakoa Valley. One hiker was pronounced dead after being transported to a local hospital. The Kauaʻi Police Department has identified the hiker as 59-year-old Masami Ozawa of Illinois. According to a preliminary report, first responders arrived on scene at approximately 11:35 a.m and found . The hiker had no pulse, was not breathing, and was being administered CPR by a bystander. Rescuers took over CPR efforts and continued advanced life support on the hiker before transporting him to Wilcox Medical Center ER, where he was pronounced dead.

First responders were alerted of the second incident at approximately 12:30 p.m., involving a 56-year-old female visitor with an ankle injury on the Kalalau Trail . First responders carried her to Air 1 and landed at Princeville Airport where she was accessed and transported to a local hospital.

The Kauaʻi Police Department is reminding residents to continue to be aware of potential scams. Police have received recent reports of Covid-related scams whereby victims end up disclosing their credit card information. Scammers are sending texts that appear as if the messages are from the United States Postal Service (USPS). The message indicates that the Covid test kits the victim may have ordered are being held at the post office. The message asks the victim to click on a link for further information. After clicking on the link, the victim is told they need to pay \$3 to have the kits sent to their homes. The victim subsequently provides their credit card number which the scammer, in turn, steals to make other purchases. If you suspect a scam, please file a police report.

The Hawaii Department of Health says the Navy is already violating the emergency order issued in connection with the Red Hill water crisis. The order, issued less than three months ago, states the Navy needs to hire a qualified DOH-approved independent contractor. On January 11th, the Navy told the DOH it hired a third-party contractor to do the job. However, the DOH says the company is not in a position to act independently This means the Navy is already breaking the rules

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Hawaiian Airlines believes it's about to be a busy spring break travel season in Hawaii. The company reports strong booking numbers ahead of this year's spring break vacation period, and believes that means economic recovery is "going in the right direction." Last year, nearly half-a-million people visited the islands for spring break, despite COVID-related restrictions.

An Atlas-V rocket will lift off from Florida this afternoon. The United Launch Alliance rocket will be carrying a series of advanced weather satellites called "GOES-T" into orbit. The satellites will stay fixed over Hawaii, tracking storms moving across the country.

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Local Kaua'i News – Wednesday March 2, 2022

Hawaii is the only state that still has a mask mandate, and it appears it'll stay that way for a while. Governor David Ige says he still isn't ready to set a date for dropping the indoor mask mandate, but plans to make a decision in the coming month. The latest statewide COVID-19 emergency proclamation expires on March 25th, and yesterday, Ige announced the Safe Travels program will end the next day. The vaccine-or-test mandate for county employees and several state properties like libraries is also coming to an end on March 26th.

Kaua'i District Health Office announced 11 new cases of COVID-19 today, Wednesday, March 2nd. Today's cases bring the number of active cases on our island to 63, with three hospitalized, and 11,909 cumulative cases. Kaua'i has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date. Meanwhile, The Hawaii State Department of Health Hawaii (DOH) reported seven new deaths related to COVID-19 in our state, and 166 new infections on Wednesday. The total number of deaths in our state now stands at 1,341.

Federal agencies are asking for public feedback on their plans to manage air tours over Hawaii's national parks. The proposals call for restricting minimum altitudes, scaling back the number of allowed flights, limiting routes over sensitive areas, and banning flying on specific days. Haleakala National Park is among two-dozen national parks crafting air tour management plans with the FAA. Feedback will be accepted through April 1st.

- The state legislature is looking at a bill that would create a five-year pilot program to fight the feral chicken problem on the islands. One of the plans calls for using a contraceptive feed called OvoControl to limit population growth. The Hawaiian Humane Society proposed that method and supports the bill. The method is already used to help control Hawaii's pigeon population.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Thursday March 3, 2022

The Kauai Police Department wants residents to beware of the latest scam trend to arise from the pandemic. People are sending text messages, pretending to be with the U.S. Postal Service. They inform residents their COVID test kits are being held at the post office, and need to pay three bucks to have them delivered to their homes. Scammers are asking their targets for their credit card numbers to pay for this. Once they get it, they're buying other things with their victims' credit cards.

Kauaʻi District Health Office announced 22 new cases of COVID-19 today, Thursday, March 3. Today's cases bring the number of active cases to 85, with three hospitalized. Kauaʻi has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date. Meanwhile, The Hawaii State Department of Health Hawaii (DOH) reported three new deaths related to COVID-19 and 314 new infections on Thursday. The total number of deaths stands at 1,344.

Hawaii's economy is now operating at close to 80-percent of its pre-pandemic level. But, State Economist Eugene Tian says a full 100-percent recovery is probably still a few years down the line. Tian says the unemployment rate has dropped with the COVID case rate, while retail and wholesale incomes are going back up. The state doesn't project a full economic recovery from the pandemic until at least 2025. That's assuming there's not another major COVID variant that leads to a big outbreak.

Mauna Kea is closer to being under new management. A bill that would strip the University of Hawaii of its management authority cleared three committees yesterday. The full House is now expected to vote on it in the coming days. If U.H. is no longer in charge, a group made up of mostly Native Hawaiians would manage the land. Some adjustments to the bill were made by committee members. One would let U.H. still have representation on the new management panel.

It wasn't the happiest homecoming for several military families displaced for months by the Navy's water crisis. Several families in recently cleared housing zones found mold in their homes, and a lot of it. The Navy says its flushing efforts haven't caused mold, and affected residents should contact their property managers. Some of the impacted families already got sick from the fuel-tainted tap water, and are now concerned the mold could lead to more health effects. They attribute the mold to leaks and the Navy's flushing work.

Athletes from Russia and Belarus are being banned from taking part in the 2022 IRONMAN World Championships. The events this year take place in Kona, as well as St. George, Utah. An announcement from the group says that they stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. The bans are in line with those recommended by the IOC.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Friday March 4, 2022

Kauaʻi District Health Office announced 11 new cases of COVID-19 today, Friday, March 4. Today's cases bring the number of active cases to 69, with three hospitalized. Kauaʻi has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date. Meanwhile, The state of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) reports 234 new coronavirus cases and four new deaths on Friday, March 4. The state death toll rose to 1,348.

Hawaii's already record-high average gas price is up another three-cents per gallon today. The average cost of a gallon of regular gas on the islands is now four-dollars, 66-cents. The average price per gallon on Oahu is four-57. On Kauai, it's up to four-89. Today's national average, rounded to the nearest cent, is three-dollars, 84-cents.

Two bills are advancing in the Senate to address Hawaii's housing shortage. One would provide 600-million dollars to the Department of Hawaiian Homeland's Native Hawaiian Rehabilitation Fund. The funds would go towards developing new lots across the state as well as assisting Native Hawaiians with the down payment or mortgage. The second would allocate 300-million towards rehabilitating affordable housing units and developing new ones across the state. The bills will head to the full Senate for a vote.

For the first time in almost two years, the state capitol will reopen to the public. It'll be open Monday, nearly two years after the coronavirus outbreak was declared a pandemic. Photo ID and proof of COVID vaccination will be required to get in. A negative test taken within 72 hours of entry is also okay. House and Senate standing committees will start accepting in-person testimony again as well.

A Hawaii farmer might set a new world record. Big Island farmer Clarence Medeiros said he has grown a 50-pound Taro, which smashes the current record. According to the Guinness website, the current record was set in 2009 with a taro weighing in at just over seven pounds. Medeiros says the accomplishment comes after over 50 years of farming the vegetable. Now, Guinness World Records will review the record application.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Monday March 7, 2022

The Pentagon is revealing plans to defuel and permanently close the Red Hill underground facility amid the ongoing water crisis. Officials made the announcement today, noting it will take about 12 months to empty the fuel tanks and close the storage facility. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the decision by the Secretary of Defense was made after a "thorough review" of Red Hill's future. President Biden recently signed a bill into law that includes 100-million dollars to empty the Navy's Red Hill fuel tanks. However, some lawmakers believe the cost could be much higher.

Authorities continue to search for a 25-year-old visitor who was swept out to sea off Kauai two days ago. New Jersey resident Matthew Preziose was swimming off Lumaha'i, when he and another swimmer got caught up in a current. The other swimmer safely made it back to shore, while Preziose was swept away. Firefighters, lifeguards, rescuers, and the Coast Guard have all been searching.

Kaua'i District Health Office announced eight new cases of COVID-19 today, Monday, March 7. Today's cases bring the number of active cases to 34, with three hospitalized. Kaua'i has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date. Meanwhile, The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) reports 92 new coronavirus cases on Monday, March 7. The state death toll remains at 1,354.

The average price of a gallon of regular gas in Hawaii is now four-dollars, 70 cents. On Oahu, it's a dime less, at four-60. Kauai County still has the most expensive gas in the state, with its average reaching four-93 per gallon today. Maui County has four-87, and the Big Island has four-84.

High school seniors graduating in the class of 2022 can apply to University of Hawaii Community Colleges through a free app. Kama'aina App is exclusively for those graduating this year from a public, private or charter school in the state. There's no application fee and officials say it takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

The FBI is looking to recruit females to the force. An online recruitment seminar is being held this week. Female agents will talk about their experiences in the FBI so women can learn more about the skill sets required to become a special agent. Special Agent Steve Merrill says FBI wants a representative group of employees to match what the community looks like. The talk starts at 10 a.m. Wednesday. You can register at Honoluluevents@fbi.gov with your name and phone number.

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Local Kaua'i News – Tuesday March 8, 2022

The planning process is underway now that the Department of Defense has finally ordered the permanent closure of the Navy's problematic Red Hill fuel storage facility. U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin says the assessment team at Red Hill will change course and start creating a plan for emptying the tanks and permanently closing the facility. The process is expected to take about a year once it starts. The plan is expected to be finalized by the end of next month. As for all the fuel, the Pentagon says it will be moved to a more dispersed fueling system in the Indo-Pacific.

Kaua'i District Health Office announced 10 new cases of COVID-19 today, Tuesday, March 8. Today's cases bring the number of active cases on our island to 35, with three hospitalized. Kaua'i has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date. Meanwhile The State of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) reports 63 new coronavirus cases today. The state death toll remains at 1,354

Hawaii's economy is showing optimistic outlooks. That's according to U-H-E-R-O, a leading economic researcher for Hawai'i and Asia Pacific, who published their first quarter forecast for 2022 Sunday. U-H-E-R-O executive director Carl Bonham says while the report shows a more "optimistic" and "upbeat" outlook since Omicron subsided and the state has been able to welcome back visitors, he still warned of inflation. He said Hawaii residents can expect to see "higher gasoline prices, eventually higher electricity prices."

A man who escaped Hawaii State Hospital has been captured. Twenty-nine-year-old Andrew Schmitke a stabbing suspect broke out of the hospital Sunday afternoon, after climbing up a gazebo, onto a roof, and over a fence. Police captured him in the Kaneohe area yesterday afternoon. He was brought back to the hospital for evaluation. The man has more than 50 cases against him.

After nearly two years of a pandemic-related closure, the state capitol is back open to the public. It reopened to the public yesterday, with several rules in place. Screeners are stationed at entrances, checking for COVID vaccination cards or recent negative tests. And, distancing and mask guidelines are still in place inside.

Governor Ige is joining state health leaders in addressing Hawaii's indoor mask mandate. Department of Health Director Dr. Elizabeth Char and State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Kemble will join the governor at the State Capitol. The press conference is set to begin at 1 p.m. Earlier today, the state Education Department said wearing a mask outdoors will no longer be required at public school campuses. They'll still be required indoors. Meantime, Hawaii is the only state in the U.S. that still has an indoor mask requirement.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Wednesday March 9, 2022

Multiple agencies on Kauai resumed search operations for a 44-year-old male resident who went missing Monday evening after not returning from swimming at Rock Quarry Beach in Kilauea. The Kauaʻi Police Department has identified the swimmer as Hooy Nwhen of Kilauea. First responders were dispatched Monday evening at approximately 7:45 p.m. and initiated a search along the shoreline and wooded area at Rock Quarry Beach in Kilauea.

A woman who's been charged with illegally acting as a Russian agent on American soil had dealings with politicians on Kauai. Yesterday, Elana Branson, was charged by the U.S. Department of Justice. A federal criminal complaint says she didn't register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, and conspired to promote pro-Russian policies and messages. In 2019, Branson was in charge of a lobbying effort to keep the Russian name of a historic fort on Kauai. She was allegedly the head of several pro-Russian organizations operating in the U.S.

Kauaʻi District Health Office announced 23 new cases of COVID-19 today, Wednesday, March 9. Today's cases bring the number of active cases to 51, with three hospitalized. Meanwhile, The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) reports 154 new coronavirus cases on today.

Nearly four months after its latest fuel spill, the Pentagon now admits the Navy's Red Hill fuel storage facility poses an imminent threat to Oahu's drinking water supply. The decades-old facility stores 100-million-gallons of fuel, just 100-feet above Oahu's aquifer. Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby says it's "evident" the fuel is a threat. For years, the Navy insisted the facility was safe because leaks were supposedly being fixed.

The search for suspects is on after Honolulu police found a decomposing body in a cemented tub inside a home in Hawaii Loa Ridge. Police first went to the home Monday, following a report of a missing person. Investigators are looking for a 23-year-old man, who they say was in an intimate relationship with the 73-year-old victim. Detectives met with the suspect at the home on Monday, before discovering the body. He had left the house by the time it was found. The cause of the person's death is not clear.

Yesterday, the State House gave preliminary approval to a measure that would eventually increase the statewide minimum wage to 18-dollars per hour. It also approved the measure that would overhaul the management of Mauna Kea. The University of Hawaii would lose its control of the mountain in favor of Native Hawaiians and cultural practitioners who consider it a sacred site. The House also gave tentative approval to a measure that would provide 600-million-dollars to fund housing for Native Hawaiians.

- Hawaii Congressman Ed Case is asking President Biden to lift the federal Jones Act to fill the gap left by the ban on importing Russian oil. Hawaii was importing about a third of its oil from Russia. The Jones Act requires all shipping between U.S. ports be provided by American-built and flagged ships. Case says, if the Jones Act is lifted, Hawaii can quickly and fully replace the oil supply it was getting from Russia with crude oil from domestic sources. The domestic oil would be transported by international companies to speed up shipping times. The Democratic congressman has also introduced

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a bill in the House that would mandate a waiver suspending the Jones Act during Russia's war with Ukraine.

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Local Kauaʻi News
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Local Kauaʻi News – Thursday March 10, 2022

Wednesday our Kauaʻi County Councilmembers unanimously voted to adopt Bill No. 2834 on it's final reading . The bill bans housing developers from writing covenants, conditions and restrictions that forbid homeowners to build additional dwelling units and additional rental units on their property. The Legislation intended to mitigate Kauaʻi housing shortage.

As coronavirus case rates slow in Hawaii, so does the frequency the State Department of Health reports them. The DOH will shift from reporting daily case numbers to giving a weekly update every Wednesday. That update will also include vaccination totals. State Health Director Doctor Elizabeth Char says current trends favor weekly reporting for painting a more accurate picture of the COVID situation. Meanwhile on Kauaʻi our District Health Office announced six new cases of COVID-19 on today, March 10. Today's cases bring the number of active cases on our island to 44, with two hospitalized

Two men wanted in connection with a murder on Oahu are behind bars after flying to Southern California. They were arrested in Los Angeles and Orange Counties yesterday afternoon. One of the suspects was aboard a Mexico-bound Greyhound bus in Anaheim. He was found in a crawl space, trying to hide under a bus seat. Honolulu police consider them suspects in the murder of a man whose decomposing body was found inside a tub in a home on Tuesday. The body was encased in concrete. It's believed one of the suspects, a 23-year-old man, was in an intimate relationship with the 73-year-old victim.

The average price for a gallon of regular gas in Hawaii is now four-dollars, 81-cents. That's up four-cents from yesterday. It's the third-highest average gas price in the nation, trailing only California and Nevada, which come in at first and second today. On Oahu, drivers are paying an average of four-71 per gallon. Kauai County, the most expensive region on the islands, has broken the five-dollar mark, coming in at five-dollars, four-cents today. The national average is four-dollars, 32-cents per gallon.

The state Senate has advanced a bill that would influence Hawaii's sustainable energy future. It would eventually set the minimum distance offshore wind turbines can be from land. The proposal originally called for banning wind turbines within 12-miles of the coast, but that stipulation failed in two key Senate committees. This week, the Senate approved a revised version of the bill that doesn't set a limit. That means the House will now be tasked with deciding how many miles offshore wind turbines must be. The state government has mandated a goal of switching to 100-percent clean energy sources by 2045.

Hawaiian Airlines is launching a statewide hiring campaign. As travelers gear up to return to the skies, the state's largest airline is looking to fill hundreds of positions. The jobs include ramp agents, flight attendants, aircraft mechanics and more. Hawaiian Airlines is hiring in Honolulu, Kahului, Maui, Lihue, Hilo and Kona, and also are offering incentives like sign-on bonuses and competitive benefits. To learn more about openings or to apply, visit Hawaiian-Airlines-dot-com-slash-Careers.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Friday March 11, 2022

A former federal worker on Kauai is being indicted after allegedly using a government credit card to rack up over 17-thousand dollars in unauthorized charges. Scott Poland made the charges over a six-month period back in 2017. He allegedly used his Department of the Interior card for purchases at big box and hardware stores, as well as utility and storage bills. The 43-charges led to a 43-count indictment for theft of government money and property.

A man who played a key role in a drug trafficking ring led by former Kauai councilman Arthur Brun has reached a plea agreement. Orlando Man-guchei will plead guilty to conspiring to possess a gun and ammo as a felon. Man-guchei and ten other suspects have been indicted for allegedly working with Brun, who has already agreed to serve 15 years in prison. The ex-councilman says he sold drugs to support his own meth habit. Man-guchei could spend up to five years behind bars and may have to pay a fine of up to a quarter-million-dollars. He will be sentenced March 24th.

The Kauaʻi County Council passed bill 2842 forbidding the feeding of feral cats on county property, in a unanimous vote on Wednesday. The bill also shortens hold times for microchipped cats at the Kauaʻi Humane Society and prohibits the abandonment of cats islandwide. The feeding prohibition in this bill is a legal requirement of the Kauaʻi Habitat Conservation Plan in order to maintain nighttime lights as a county and not get fined by the federal government under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Affected lights include high schools' Friday night lights games. The Bill now must go to the Mayor's Office for approval. If signed into law, it will take effect on Jan. 1, 2023.

Kauaʻi District Health Office announced 10 new cases of COVID-19 today, Friday, March 11. Today's cases bring the number of active cases to 42, with two hospitalized. Kauaʻi has a total of 27 COVID fatalities to date.

One day after his arrest, a man wanted in connection with a murder in East Honolulu was released by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Thirty-four-year-old Scott Hannon was released yesterday. Authorities say they did not have probable cause to keep him in custody. The second suspect, 23-year-old Juan Baron, is still being held without bail and awaiting an extradition hearing. Honolulu police have accused the men of murdering a 73-year-old man and encasing his body in concrete in his home in Hawaii Loa Ridge.

Drought conditions are hitting some communities on Hawaii hard. As the conditions spread most of the state is now listed under at least "moderate drought." One National Weather Service forecaster says many areas are seeing less than 30-percent of their normal rainfall during the state's wet season. Meantime, three key wells remain shut down due to the water contamination crisis, and now the Honolulu Board of Water Supply is urging voluntary conservation efforts on Oahu. BWS says water use must be cut by ten-percent, and possibly as much as 20-percent with summer approaching.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Monday March 14, 2022

Kauai County emergency crews rescued an escaped hospital patient who spent three hours in the ocean. The incident happened Friday, but authorities didn't release a full report about the details until yesterday. The man walked out of Samuel Mahelona Memorial Hospital without the proper authorization, then jumped into the ocean near Kai-akea Point in Kealia. The man was spotted swimming in the ocean, about two-miles north of where he was last seen. A helicopter rescued him and transported him to awaiting family members at Nawiliwili Small Boat Harbor. He was eventually returned to Mahelona .

We're learning more about the woman accused of working as a Russian operative and lobbying lawmakers in Kauai County. Elena Branson has been accused of using a Kauai County Councilmember and a nonprofit organization to try to lure local lawmakers to meetings with high-ranking officials in the Russian Federation. In 2019, Branson was on Kauai trying to convince lawmakers to preserve the formal name of Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park in Waimea. Prosecutors say she started a nonprofit called the Russian Kauaiian Association to stop efforts to change the fort's name back to its original Hawaiian name. At Branson's request, Kauai County Councilwoman Felicia Cowden invited Governor Ige, former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami, Senate President Ron Kouchi, and more leaders to meetings with Russian officials about keeping the fort's name. They all declined, and the fort has yet to be renamed. A federal criminal complaint says Russian President Vladimir Putin picked Branson to push pro-Russian policies and build relationships with government officials in Hawaii.

A couple from Palolo has now been charged on suspicion of trafficking a teen girl and holding her captive in their home. The man and woman were charged with labor trafficking. Police say they beat the 15-year-old girl and forced her to work as their servant. Yesterday, they were each being held behind bars on a quarter-million-dollars bail and face up to 20 years in prison if convicted. The girl and her mom flew to Hawaii from Guam last year, and the couple helped them move in. The suspects are accused of taking the mother and daughter's passports right after picking them up from the airport. Police were called to the home last week after the girl told a school counselor what was going on.

The average price for a gallon of regular gas in Hawaii, rounded to the nearest cent, is four-dollars, 96-cents. It's the third-most expensive gas in the nation, trailing Nevada by a tenth of a cent. On Oahu, the average price is up to four-dollars, 86-cents per gallon. It's the only island still below the five-twelve mark. Kauai County still has the priciest gas in the state, with drivers on the Garden Isle paying an average of five-16 today. Maui County has five-13, and the Big Island has five-12.

Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami delivered his state of the county address today calling for a 260 million dollar operating budget and a Capital Improvement budget of nearly 49 million for fiscal year 2023. Kawakami stated that the budget aims to make headway on decades of deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs. To view the complete address visit the County of Kauai facebook page.

Our Kauaʻi District Health Office announced no new cases of COVID-19 today, Monday, March 14. "Today is the last day that the County will issue daily COVID-19 case counts. Kauaʻi residents can find County data on the DOH website, where it is updated weekly on Wednesday," said Dr. Janet

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Berreman, Kaua'i District Health Officer. The active cases on Kauai now stands at 27, with two hospitalized.

A tsunami warning center in Hawaii is outdated and in need of a major systems overhaul. That's according to a new report from the Tsunami Science and Technology Advisory Panel. According to the report, the entire U.S. tsunami warning system needs significant work. However, the report names the most pressing matters include the Honolulu center and one in Palmer, Alaska. The panel's report warns outdated software and poor communication limit the improvement of the warning process.

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Local Kauaī News – Tuesday March 15, 2022

Monday afternoon, a 70-year-old Wailua woman was pulled from her vehicle, which was found overturned in a Kapaōa stream off of Kamalu Road around 1:45 p.m. The operator, who was the only occupant of the vehicle, was extricated by responding police officers and fire personnel. She was transported to Mahelona Hospital and later transferred to Wilcox Memorial Hospital where she remains in critical condition. Kamalu Road between Opaekaa and Olohena was closed for about 2 hours.

Firefighters extinguished a fire in Lawai Monday evening that destroyed a shed and damaged the rear portion of a home. No injuries were reported, and no one was displaced. Upon arrival, firefighters discovered a shed fully engulfed in flames – with the main home just a few feet from the fire. Firefighters prevented widespread fire to the Lawai home. Fire Prevention Bureau inspectors estimated that 20% of the main home suffered fire damage. However, the shed is considered a total loss. Damages to the property and its contents are estimated at \$175,000.

Hawaiian Electric recently announced customers should expect their bills to go up 10% on Oahu and as much as 20% on Maui and Hawaii Island. Meanwhile, Kauai is only expecting an increase between 2 to 10%. KIUC Emphasis on renewable energy sources is credited with the difference. Kauai Island Utility Cooperative's energy mix is roughly 70% renewable, while Hawaiian Electric is at around 38%. That means folks on Kauai will see their bill rise just between \$4 to \$20. By the end of 2025, KIUC expects to be approaching 90% renewable energy.

An Anahola project will soon provide land to 51 families on the state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands waitlist. The lots are the second phase of the Pi'ilani Mai Ke Kai subdivision project, which will ultimately include a total of 171 lots. Beneficiaries will get the chance to select their lots in April. They will be sent a letter in order of their position on the wait-list. The DHHL could receive a major funding increase this year. Legislation in the State and House and Senate would appropriate \$600 million to the agency. The funding could get nearly 3,000 beneficiaries off the waitlist

Meanwhile statewide Nearly half of the beneficiaries on the Hawaiian Home Lands waitlist would accept a buyout. Forty-five-percent of those surveyed by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands say they'd take cash instead of housing if a new buyout proposal is approved. Those surveyed were hypothetically offered 100-thousand-dollars to buy a new home, pay their mortgage, or pay their rent. In exchange for the money, they'd agree to take themselves off the wait list. There are currently 28-thousand-700 applicants on the DHHL's wait list for receiving leases.

The average price for a gallon of regular gas in Hawaii, rounded up to the nearest cent, has reached five-dollars. It's the first time that's happened, and makes Hawaii's gas the second-most expensive in the nation, only trailing California today. Oahu is still under five-dollars per gallon, but drivers on the neighbor islands are paying more by the day. On Kauai motorists are paying on average five-23.

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Local Kaua'i News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March**

Local Kaua'i News – Wednesday March 16, 2022

A six-year \$10 million gift commitment from Dr. Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg, is going to fund a new Kaua'i Medical Training Track. The gift to University of Hawai'i at Manoa's John A. Burns School of Medicine will fund tuition and fees to train six medical students who have ties to Kaua'i or another neighboring island and are interested in rural health care, beginning in July. The Kaua'i program aims to enhance access to health care on the island and add physicians by offering rural residencies under trained faculty. UH will partner with Wilcox Health and Hawai'i Pacific Health Medical Group and hopes that the program will add 21 residents to Kaua'i annually.

A 16-year-old female from O'ahu was rescued at Queen's Bath in Princeville Monday afternoon. First responders were dispatched to the area around noon, when they received a report of a girl trapped on the rocks and surrounded by dangerous surf. A Hanalei firefighter, who had hiked down to the scene, swam over the dangerous waters to the victim and brought her to safety without further incident. The access gate to Queen's Bath has been closed to the public since October 2021 for the high surf winter season. The gate remains closed until further notice. Fire Chief Steven Goble says "This incident could have easily turned into a devastating outcome. Queen's Bath remains closed for a reason, and we urge all beachgoers to take these warnings seriously, for yourself and for our first responders who also put their lives at risk."

The Navy has opened a supplemental investigation into the Red Hill fuel leak and water crisis. Officials will analyze the Navy's response to the fuel leak between May and November of last year. The Navy says its first investigation, launched late last year, didn't adequately review the actions taken. It adds that this new investigation will be conducted with a sense of urgency, but no timetable has been given.

The 23-year-old man suspected of murdering his 73-year-old lover at his Oahu home in Hawaii Loa Ridge is expected to return to Hawaii next month. Juan Baron allegedly murdered Gary Ruby, encased his body in concrete in a tub, then fled to Los Angeles after being questioned by Honolulu police. The L.A. County District Attorney's Office says Baron waived his extradition on Monday. Authorities from Hawaii are scheduled to pick him up on or before April 13th.

About a quarter of Hawaii residents want stricter alcohol laws in the state. That's according to a new study by the Desert Hope Treatment Center. They questioned more than six-thousand people nationwide, finding one in four people in Hawaii are in favor of limiting the sale of alcohol to certain days of the week or times of day. In comparison, the national response was 22-percent in favor.

The average price for a gallon of regular gas on the islands climbed by eight-cents overnight. The statewide average is now five-dollars, eight-cents per gallon. Oahu is the last island yet to hit the five-dollar mark, but that's likely coming to an end this week. Its drivers are now paying an average of four-99. Kauai County, where drivers are paying the most of anywhere in Hawaii, is up to five-28.

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Local Kauaʻi News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaʻi News – Thursday March 17, 2022

Our Kauaʻi Police Department is asking for the public’s help finding a missing man. Benjamin Brothers, age 80, was last seen at March 16, in his residence in Hanapēpē. Brothers is 5 feet, 9 inches tall and weighs 100 pounds. He has gray hair, blue eyes, and is of Caucasian descent. The Kauaʻi Fire Department and the U.S. Coast Guard are also part of the search efforts. Earlier Wednesday, KPD personnel located his truck and trailer at Port Allen Small Boat Harbor. Additionally, first responders found his jet ski approximately 6.5 miles offshore. Anyone with information about Brothers’ whereabouts is urged to call KPD Dispatch at 241-1711 or Crime Stoppers Kauaʻi at 246-8300.

The Kauaʻi Police Department (KPD) is asking for the public’s help in locating the driver of a vehicle involved in hit-and-run incident. On March 4 at about 1 p.m., a dark gray or black-colored Honda Ridgeline truck with surf racks and an aftermarket logo on the driver door, struck a pedestrian in the Costco/Home Depot parking lot. The suspect subsequently fled the scene. The pedestrian, a 26-year-old Līhuāne man, was treated at Wilcox Medical Center for non-life-threatening injuries. If you have any information on the suspect’s whereabouts, please contact Lieutenant Darren Rose at 241-1638. If you wish to remain anonymous, please call the Crime Stoppers Kauaʻi at 246-8300

State lawmakers are calling for the Navy to provide more clarity about its plans to drain its Red Hill fuel tanks and shut down the facility. The Navy says the defueling process will take a year, and a plan outlining how it will be done safely is due at the end of May. That timeline has lawmakers concerned draining won't start until after possible mandatory water restrictions kick in this summer. State Representative Bob McDermott is wary of the plan, saying the Secretary of Defense's order to drain the fuel is just a promise and isn't backed by the law. He's afraid defueling may actually take several years.

The newly redrawn maps for Hawaii's legislative districts can stay as they are. Yesterday, in a split decision, the state Supreme Court rejected a legal challenge to the maps. A group of Oahu, Maui and Big Island residents were pushing to overturn the adoption of the new maps, accusing the Hawaii Reapportionment Commission of gerrymandering, political favoritism and failing to follow constitutional redistricting guidelines.

An investigation is underway into a teenager who Honolulu P-D says stole over 20-thousand-dollars worth of items. The Honolulu Police Department says the 15-year-old boy was arrested late Tuesday afternoon after stealing from a retail store in Waikēle. The teenage boy tried to flee, but was eventually caught and arrested. He was later released from custody as the investigation continues.

A team of trained professionals with NOAA likely saved another humpback whale's life after it got caught up in fishing line off Maui. On Tuesday, crews freed the adult male, which was entangled in heavy gauge line of the coast Maalaea. NOAA says the entanglement was life-threatening. The whale was first seen by a touring ship on Sunday, but disappeared before the team of responders could arrive. Another boat spotted it Tuesday, and this time, the crew was able to find it and come to its rescue.

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Local Kauaʻi News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaʻi News – Friday March 18, 2022

Someone blacked out the word "Russian" on the sign outside our west side's Russian Fort Elisabeth. The word was covered with spray paint at some time earlier this week. Scholars say Russians had a very small presence in the fort's history. But, it was given the name Russian Fort Elisabeth in 1970, when it became a state park. There is a movement to rename the area with it's original Hawaiian name. Last week, a Russian national who tried to influence the naming future of the fort was accused of acting as a Russian spy on U.S. soil.

A Hawaiian homestead nonprofit governed by enrolled members of the *Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead* purchased a 6-unit apartment property in downtown Līhuʻe, Kauaʻi. The purchase by the Homestead Community Development Corporation closed on Jan. 14, 2022 marking a first, in fee property ownership and rental housing management by the nonprofit. "This is the first off-tribal lands property to be owned by the SCHHA through our homestead nonprofit," said Kipukai Kualii, the SCHHA Policy Committee Chair.

A state lawmaker is pushing for a complete investigation into last month's deadly beating on the steps outside the Kapolei police station. A man who had just been released from a jail cell after his arrest on suspicion of punching a Honolulu police officer is accused of beating a woman to death just feet away from the front door. State Representative Gene Ward wants to know how and why the suspect, Michael Armstrong, was released. He wants answers from the HPD, the city prosecutor's office, and the state Attorney General.

Hawaii is proving to be a great place for minority-owned businesses to thrive. A study by financial site Smartest-Dollar-dot-com ranked urban areas with the most minority-owned businesses, looking at location ratios to determine the results. In the midsize metro category Urban Honolulu came in first nationwide. They also say just over 58-percent of businesses in Hawaii are minority-owned. In comparison, the study found 19-percent of businesses in the nation are minority-owned.

The Hawaii National Guard is ending its COVID-19 response mission. All of its pandemic-related responsibilities will be absorbed by state authorities. For several months, troops have worked alongside county, state, and federal authorities. The move comes with the Safe Travels program and statewide indoor mask mandate ending next week.

Hawaii's average gas price didn't go up today, but it didn't go down either. It's still five-dollars, 12-cents for a gallon of regular. Oahu's average actually dropped a penny, to five-dollars, three-cents. Maui County has also surpassed Kauai County as the most expensive region in the state. Gas there is five-29 today, two cents more than on the Garden Isle.

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Local Kauaï News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaï News – Monday March 21, 2022

A Civil Air Patrol plane with two people on board crashed during a training exercise on Kauai Sunday afternoon, killing the two people on board . According to preliminary information from the FAA, the single-engine Cessna 172 crashed into mountainous terrain in the Kokee area around 3:45 p.m.. The Kalalau Lookout in Kokee is closed today, according to Kauai County, and a “No Fly Zone” is in place for the Kalalau and Koke’e areas.The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Kauai Police Department and NTSb are investigating. Our condolences go out to the victims families and friends.

There are no reports of significant aftershocks after a magnitude four-point-five earthquake struck the Big Island. More than 500 people reported feeling shaking at 7:30 yesterday morning. It was centered under Mauna Kea's northwest flank. No injuries or damage have been reported and there was no tsunami threat. The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory says the earthquake was not connected with volcanic activity, but remind everyone the small eruption at the summit of Kilauea is still going, though it's contained to just one area now.

Nearly a year after his death, tributes continue for legendary Rainbow Warriors' quarterback Colt Brennan. Hundreds of people from family, to friends, to strangers celebrated Brennan's life along the shores of Waikiki yesterday morning. Former head coach June Jones and Brennan's father were among the speakers at the ceremony. There was also a paddle-out to spread Brennan's ashes in the water. Brennan died of an accidental drug overdose last May in California. He was 37-years-old.

A new study is revealing that the most common species of coral in Hawaii are more resilient to climate change than previously thought. A nearly two-year-long study conducted at the University of Hawaii found that over 60-percent of coral exposed to warmer ocean temperatures survived. The study's original projections estimated that 99-percent of the coral would die by the end of the experiment. The long term study let scientists take a peek into the future as coral reefs around the world are threatened by the growing impact of climate change.

Those balloon-like objects seen floating over Oahu, they're not UFO's. The balloons are part of a product test for a company called Raven Aerostar. The balloons were launched from South Dakota, and intentionally flown to Hawaii with a combination of machine learning and wind currents. The company says the balloons will eventually provide cellphone network coverage during events like natural disasters and monitor wildfires.

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Local Kauaʻi News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaʻi News – Tuesday March 22, 2022

Two men were killed Sunday when a Civil Air Patrol Cessna 172 Skyhawk crashed in the the Kokee area. The victims were identified by Kauaʻi Police Department as Princeville resident James Degnan, 76, and Kapaʻa resident David Parker, 78. They were conducting monthly tsunami-warning practice runs for CAP. The NTSB reports the plane went down , a few thousand feet below the Kalalau Lookout. The NTSB and FAA are investigating the cause of the crash.

New data provides some insight into the status of Hawaii's hotel industry. Hotel analytics company STR shows hotels had a slower start to 2022 than expected. In February, hotels had an occupancy of more than 72-percent. That's better than last year, but not as good as February of 2020. That final pre-pandemic month saw a statewide hotel occupancy rate of nearly 85-percent. More than 601-thousand visitors arrived on the islands last month, compared with more than 828-thousand in February of 2020.

The BA-two coronavirus variant has now been detected in all of Hawaii's major counties. The Omicron subvariant now accounts for 13-percent of the variants circulating in Hawaii. That's more than twice the number of cases of the subvariant detected in the state's last variant report, released at the start of the month. The steadily rising subvariant was first detected in Hawaii on January 28th. It's believed to be more contagious than the original strain of Omicron, but does not get people sicker.

Oahu's construction industry could suffer one of the greatest secondary effects of the Navy's water contamination crisis. Yesterday, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply told state senators a moratorium on new construction may be needed to save water. Developers are already getting letters from the BWS saying access to water for new buildings is no longer a guarantee. The BWS also says it might issue mandatory water limits for residential and commercial customers

There's another phone scam targeting Hawaii's residents, and this one has to do with unemployment. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations says scammers are turning to a text message phishing trick. People get a text saying their UI Unemployment Account has been restricted, and are asked to "verify" by clicking on a link. Don't click on that link. Those who do are giving scammers access to their personal unemployment claimant information. Those who've already clicked on the links may have had their personal information compromised. The DLIR says those who think they've been victimized by this should call the UI Call Center. The real one, that is.

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Local Kauaʻi News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaʻi News – Wednesday March 23, 2022

Kauaʻi Habitat for Humanity was recently awarded \$5.75 million as a portion of a \$436-million gift from American author and philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. The donation will be used to advance Kauaʻi Habitat for Humanity’s strategic vision that aims to increase access to affordable housing, keep up the maintenance of existing housing and prepare those who strive to achieve homeownership through homeownership education. Since 1992, Kauaʻi Habitat for Humanity has built 223 affordable homes and made critical repairs to 37 existing homes for Kauaʻi families whose household income is between 30 to 80 percent of the median Kauaʻi income.

The state Department of Health has spent one-point-five-million-dollars for its efforts to respond to the Navy's Red Hill water crisis. The DOH is now asking for emergency funds to reimburse those costs. The money has been spent on lab tests, supplies, staff overtime, outside experts and consultants, and crisis communications assistance. More than half-a-million-dollars has been spent on lab testing, and nearly 700-thousand-dollars have been spent on bringing in outside experts and consultants.

At the direction of the President of the United States, In order to honor former Secretary of state Madeleine Albright, who died at age 84 after a battle with cancer, Gov. David Ige has ordered that the United States flag and the Hawaiʻi state flag be flown at half-staff in State of Hawaiʻi until sunset on Sunday, March 27, 2022. Albright was the first female Secretary of State in the U.S. and helped steer Western foreign policy in the aftermath of the Cold War. She also previously served as an ambassador to the United Nations.

Students and parents may have to say goodbye to free meals at public schools. Thanks to federal funding, all students have been able to get free meals during the pandemic. But, that federal funding is coming to an end when the school year ends. When the pandemic started more than two years ago, the USDA waived its restrictions, allowing all kids across the country access to free school meals. However, the latest one-point-five-trillion-dollar federal spending bill does not extend funding for the program.

A Southern California tourist is dead after falling from a Waikiki Hotel balcony. Honolulu police report the 39-year-old man fell early Tuesday morning from the Sheraton Waikiki. Investigators say he fell while trying to climb from the balcony of his room to the balcony of the room next door where his friend was staying. It's unknown what floor he had been on, but his body was recovered from the hotel's pool deck.

Be on high alert when answering phone calls from strangers in Maui County. Police have received reports of scammers pretending to be the IRS, offering free vacations, and acting like they provide roofing repairs and services. The MPD has been getting one or two reports about scam calls each week for the past several weeks. Police remind people that legitimate government agencies or businesses would never ask for social security numbers and birth dates over the phone.

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Local Kauaï News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March**

Local Kauaï News – Thursday March 24, 2022

Hawaii Pacific Health will close all of its COVID-19 vaccination clinics and testing sites at the end of March because demand has decreased significantly. HPH officials say anyone who has an appointment scheduled after March 31 will be contacted and offered alternatives. HPH will still offer COVID-19 testing and screening through its clinics by appointment only.

The indoor mask mandate will end at 11:59 p.m. Friday, the last major COVID restriction. But officials stress that masks won't be going away entirely. However, Under federal guidelines, mask use on public transportation will continue until April 18. Masks are also still mandated in public schools, prisons and jails and airports. Private businesses are also within their rights to require masks.

The University of Hawaii is ending its coronavirus vaccination and testing mandates starting Saturday. The move will come on the same day as the end of the statewide indoor mask mandate and Safe Travels program. More than 90-percent of students and staff members at the ten U.H. campuses are fully vaccinated. The rest have been required to regularly submit COVID test results to remain on campus.

Honolulu is topping the list of worst places to live if you make minimum wage. Move-dot-org compared average rent in large cities to the minimum wage in them. Minimum wage is a little higher than ten-dollars an hour in Honolulu, with average rent for a one-bedroom apartment almost two-thousand dollars. Cleveland, Ohio ranked as the most affordable large city in the country.

The bill that would remove the University of Hawaii as the sole manager of Mauna Kea has advanced further in the state legislature. The Senate Committee on Higher Education passed the bill yesterday, but made several amendments first. U.H. Hilo would have authority when it comes to administrative issues rather than the U.H. President or regents. The stewardship of Mauna Kea is currently under U.H. Hilo. It still calls for the creation of the Mauna A Wakea stewardship authority, which would have eleven voting members, including U.H., the DLNR, the Native Hawaiian community, and the observatories. Earlier this week, U.H. officials warned the bill would kill future astronomy efforts on the mauna.

Charles Rapozo Sr. and his son Kurt from Kapaa may have etched their names into the record books with a big catch. On Monday, they caught a ten-pound, eleven-ounce moi at Kauai's Kealia Beach. That's five-ounces heavier than the old record-setting catch from 2008. That moi was also caught on the shores of Kauai. Monday's catch measured 25-inches long and six-inches wide. It took a half-hour to reel it in, and it was so big, the men thought they might have had a shark on the line. The father and son say they're putting the moi in the steamer and sharing it with neighbors. They're first waiting for official certification that they indeed broke the record.

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Local Kauaī News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March

Local Kauaī News – Friday March 25, 2022

A federal judge has turned down a proposed plea deal for Arthur Brun, the ex-Kauai County councilman accused of leading a meth ring. Brun, who was arrested as a sitting councilmember in 2020, would have agreed to serve 15 years behind bars. He was facing the possibility of life in prison, but agreed to plead guilty in November in exchange for 15 years without the possibility of parole. Brun's attorney and federal prosecutors now need to hammer out a new plea agreement that includes a longer sentence. If not, he could go on trial for charges of distributing meth, firearms violations, and assaulting a law enforcement officer.

The B-A-Two Omicron subvariant is on Kauai. A sewage surveillance program has detected the highly contagious coronavirus variant in the island's wastewater. Governor Ige says the surveillance program gives officials a warning four to ten days in advance that the variant is present, and determines which communities have the most infections. B-A-Two is believed to be at least 30-percent more contagious than the original Omicron variant that caused the COVID case surge in December and January. Ige says the variant isn't a major concern though, because Hawaii has such a high vaccination rate.

After nearly two years, today is the final day of Hawaii's indoor mask mandate. The last mask mandate in the nation will be lifted a minute before midnight. But, keep your masks for public transportation since they're still required there. Federal guidelines make masks a must on public transit through April 18th. Public schools, prisons, jails, and airports are also still requiring face coverings for the time being. And, private businesses have the right to keep asking for masks. The Safe Travels program that's for months mandated visitors be fully vaccinated or recently tested for coronavirus to come to the islands without quarantining is also going away late tonight.

more residents left the our state in 2021 for the mainland than moved in, new Census Bureau estimates show. Oahu saw the most dramatic decline, losing a net total of more than 12,300 residents. Maui County also saw a decline in population — of just over 430 residents. Meanwhile, Hawaii Island gained more 2,000 residents and Kauai County grew by about 250 people.

Governor Ige is extending funding for a federal food assistance program. The governor's office reports he signed an emergency proclamation yesterday to continue the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Since the on-set of the COVID pandemic, Hawaii has seen a 36-percent increase in those receiving assistance through the program. By signing the proclamation, 18-million-dollars in federal funds can continue to be distributed to SNAP recipients. This emergency relief period will continue through May 24th.

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Local Kaua'i News
2022 - Quarter 1 – March**

Local Kaua'i News – Monday March 28, 2022

A second round of free COVID-19 home test kits will be available to Kaua'i residents from March 28 to April 1. The free test kits are provided by the County of Kaua'i, in partnership with the Department of Health Kaua'i District Health Office, using federal funding. Approximately 15,000 kits will be handed out, with a limit of five tests per individual/household, on a first-come, first-served basis. Today's distribution continues on the west side at Waimea Neighborhood Center – 1 to 4 p.m. And tomorrow, Tuesday, March 29: the kits will be distributed at the Hanalei Neighborhood Center – 9 a.m. to noon and the Kīlauea Neighborhood Center – 1 to 4 p.m. Other sites will continue the distributions this week.

Hawaii's indoor mask mandate, the last in the nation, went away during the weekend. But, public school students and staff members still have to keep their faces covered indoors. The state Department of Education has not announced a date or target metric for lifting its mask mandate, but the teachers' union is in no hurry. The Hawaii State Teachers Association has come out in support of keeping masks on in classrooms, saying science proves they work and keep students and staff safer during the seven hours they're in close proximity with each other every day.

In-person visits return to Hawaii's jails and prisons today. They've been suspended since the pandemic started more than two years ago. Facilities will still be following the CDC's social distancing requirements for contained correctional settings. That means visitors will have to wear masks at all times, undergo a temperature check, and fill out a COVID-19 health screening before they're allowed inside.

Thousands of Hawaii's residents fell victim to online scams last year. New data from the FBI shows Hawaii lost a collective 17-point-two-million-dollars to internet crimes in 2021. A few of the most popular methods included investment scams, romance cons, and illegally using digital currency like bitcoin. But, most of the victims lost money through online billing issues or never got what they paid for delivered to their homes. That sort of situation accounted for 235 of last year's cases alone. Two-hundred-eight people were extorted, and 202 were victims of personal data breaches. Investment scams cost Hawaii's internet crime victims more than five-million-dollars last year.

Hawaii's population has declined for the sixth straight year. Federal data shows the state lost more than ten-thousand residents between July 1st of 2020 and July 1st of 2021. This has been the trend dating back to 2017. People who are leaving the islands tend to be younger. The state's elderly population is getting larger, while the birth rate dwindles. Economists attribute the ongoing exodus from Hawaii to the rising costs of food and housing. While the overall statewide population declined, the populations of the Big Island and Kauai Counties grew last year.

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2022 - Quarter 1 – March**

Local Kauaī News – Tuesday March 29, 2022

Nothing in the preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board suggested technical difficulties with the plane in the deadly crash of a Civil Air Patrol plane here on Kauai. Instead the report indicates that poor weather conditions contributed heavily to the crash that resulted in the deaths of pilots Lt. Col. James Degnan, 76, and Capt. David Parker, 78. Degnan and Parker, Civil Air Patrol pilots, were participating in a routine tsunami alert training mission on March 20. According to the NTSB report released today, after departing Lihue Airport just before 3 p.m., their Cessna airplane lost tracking abilities approximately 11 minutes later, and crashed. The wreckage was discovered about 13 miles north of Kekaha with no survivors.

On Oahu The Board of Water Supply keeps urging people to save water, but judging by the data, most Honolulu residents aren't listening. Water use is up again this month, as it has been since November. The BWS warns mandatory restrictions could be coming this summer if people don't start managing their water use now. Usage rates go up every summer anyway, but this year three municipal wells are shut down as a precaution because of the Navy's Red Hill fuel leak. The BWS expects to be in a crisis situation for several years. Oahu residents are asked to reduce their water usage by at least ten-percent.

A bill that would ban Hawaii's male jail and prison guards from strip searching and patting down female inmates is closer to passing. Male correctional facility employees would also no longer be allowed in areas where women are undressing. There would be an exception to both rules if an inmate is presenting an immediate threat of harm to herself or others. The bill recently cleared the House Corrections, Military and Veterans Committee. The House Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee plans to hear it tomorrow.

President Biden's latest budget proposal includes a request for a billion dollars to defuel the Red Hill fuel storage facility. The money would also be used for a so-called Red Hill Recovery Fund that the Department of Defense would use to address health, environmental and national security needs in relation to shutting down the facility. The official budget request says the cash would be available to the Secretary of Defense for actions that will be in compliance with Hawaii Department of Health laws.

Doctor Rudolph Puana's federal drug trial starts today. Puana is a doctor on the Big Island and is the brother of ex-Honolulu official Katherine Kealoha. Prosecutors say he wrote prescriptions for opiates for his friends, who then sold the pills or traded them for other drugs like cocaine. In her plea agreement, reached three years ago, Kealoha admitted to being a part of the drug ring. She's expected to testify at some point during this trial, serving as a prosecutor's witness.

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Local Kauaʻi News – Wednesday March 30, 2022

Our Kauaʻi Police Department is seeking the public's help in identifying a man who was seen stealing approximately \$2,000 worth of Milwaukee and other brand equipment from Home Depot. The incident happened at approximately 12:50 p.m. on Friday, March 4. Surveillance footage shows the suspect, an approximately 6-foot-tall, Caucasian male wearing a red plaid shirt and khaki pants, walking out of the store with a cart full of merchandise. Store employees tried to stop the suspect, but he ran toward the Costco parking lot and was able to escape after abandoning the stolen merchandise. Anyone with information on this individual is urged to contact Detective Morris Unutoa at 241-1691. or Anonymous tips can also be made by calling Crime Stoppers Kauaʻi at 246-8300

Our State of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) is reporting 1,187 new coronavirus cases and six new deaths in the last week. That brings the state total number of infections to 240,778 and deaths in our state to 1,379.

The state health department has approved second doses of coronavirus boosters, and the shots can begin going into arms today. The fourth dose is now cleared for all residents aged 50 and older. The FDA authorized the extra doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines yesterday. People can get their second booster at least four months after taking their first one. The development comes during the steady rise of the B-A-two Omicron subvariant across the country.

On Oahu The chief engineer for the Board of Water Supply fears fuel contamination from the Red Hill leak could be spreading. Ernie Lau says he's heard concerning developments within the past two weeks. Lau says his program manager, Irwin Kawata, goes to Aquifer Recovery Focus Group meetings twice a week and heard contamination is spreading to water sources that previously weren't affected. The meetings are attended by 80 stakeholders, including the Navy, state health department, EPA, and BWS. Lau also thinks last year's fuel leak could have spread fuel that was left over from past leaks. Red Hill has been connected with 72 fuel leaks of 180-thousand-gallons or more through the years. Lau wants the Navy to release data about its recent findings.

A couple has filed a temporary restraining order against actor Ezra Miller following Miller's arrest in Hilo last weekend. Miller, seen in the show "The Flash," was arrested on suspicion of harassment and disorderly conduct at a karaoke bar. Miller had been staying with the husband and wife, and they paid the 500-bucks to bail him out of jail. But, they claim Miller threatened to kill them and stole one of their wallets. Miller was arrested after allegedly berating people for singing karaoke at a karaoke bar.

A volunteer Civil Air Patrol plane was flying in bad weather before a crash that killed its two pilots on Kauai earlier this month. The NTSB has released its preliminary report on the plane crash. The crew was conducting routine hurricane and tsunami practice runs when the plane went down in a mountainous area 13-miles north of Kekaha. A tracking device recovered from the plane shows it was traveling toward rising terrain. It could be up to two years before the NTSB releases its final report on the crash.