



For Immediate Release: May 25, 2018
HTA Release (18-30)

“Air Quality is Safe in the Hawaiian Islands” – Hawai'i Governor David Ige and State's Top Health Official

HONOLULU – Knowing travelers are expressing concerns about emissions from Kīlauea volcano, Hawai'i Governor David Ige and State Department of Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler emphasized today that the air quality of the Hawaiian Islands is safe and should not dissuade them from booking vacations.

Dr. Pressler commented, “The air quality for the vast majority of the Hawaiian Islands is clean and healthy. The emissions from Kīlauea volcano are a non-factor for O'ahu, Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i and Kaua'i. The weather is beautiful and warm with cooling trade winds everywhere in Hawai'i and is exactly what travelers expect when coming here for a relaxing and fun vacation experience. This includes Hilo, Pāhoa and the Kona and Kohala coasts on the island of Hawai'i.

“The areas where precautions are required for people are in lower Puna where lava is flowing and downwind from there on the island of Hawai'i, particularly if they have respiratory problems. Because of heavy emissions of vog, as well as occasional bursts of ash plumes from the Kīlauea summit, the southeast portions of the island are also routinely experiencing concerning conditions. Those visiting areas south of Hilo should stay alert for air quality updates, especially when wind conditions change. Fortunately, when trade winds are blowing, the vog and ash routinely move in a southwesterly direction and out to sea away from the Hawaiian Islands.”

Governor Ige stated, “Hawai'i's air quality is being closely monitored on a continuing basis by scientists, meteorologists and the Hawai'i State Department of Health. This team of experts says the air quality in the Hawaiian Islands is safe for residents and visitors, except in the affected areas.

“Two other topics that I want to alleviate people's concerns about are laze and the Puna Geothermal Venture plant. Laze is a natural reaction that occurs whenever lava flows into the ocean as it is doing now and has from time to time over the past 35 years. This is all part of nature's way of creating new land for life to grow. Laze is limited to the area where the lava meets the ocean and is not a danger to people who keep a safe distance away.

“At the Puna Geothermal Venture plant, the state is actively directing protective actions to reduce the risk from lava flows moving nearby. The underground wells have been sealed and secured minimizing the threat to the safety of people and communities.

“The bottom line is that there is no reason for travelers to avoid making their vacation plans in the Hawaiian Islands due to safety concerns because of Kīlauea volcano.

“Visitors will be welcomed with open arms and treated to the hospitality, aloha, warmth and natural beauty that is found everywhere in Hawai'i. The only area to avoid is lower Puna where the eruption is ongoing.”

George D. Szigeti, president and CEO of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), echoed the governor's sentiment in welcoming visitors to Hawai'i. “We understand the concern some travelers may have about coming to Hawai'i while Kīlauea volcano is so much more active at this time. But we encourage everyone to do their research and rely on trusted federal, state and county resources that are providing

truthful, accurate information about what is taking place in Hawai‘i. Those who do will find that coming to Hawai‘i is a smart decision to enjoy a wonderful summer vacation.”

Kīlauea has been an active volcano since 1983 and is one of Hawai‘i’s most popular attractions. Over the years residents and visitors have been drawn to the wonder of seeing nature at work in the creation of new land via tours or visits to Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park. Most of the park is currently closed until further notice.

For the latest update on air quality in the Hawaiian Islands, please reference the State of Hawai‘i Interagency Vog Information Dashboard: <http://www.ivhhn.org/vog/>

For the latest tourism updates please visit the Special Alerts page of the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority: <http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/news/special-alert/>

Travelers planning a trip to the Hawaiian Islands who have questions can contact the Hawai‘i Tourism United States Call Center at 1-800-GOHAWAII (1-800-464-2924).

About the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority

The [Hawai‘i Tourism Authority](http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org) is responsible for strategically managing the State of Hawai‘i’s marketing initiatives to support tourism. HTA’s goal is to optimize tourism’s benefits for Hawai‘i, while being attentive to the interests of travelers, the community and visitor industry. Established in 1998 to support Hawai‘i’s leading industry and largest employer, HTA continually strives to help ensure the sustainability of tourism’s success.

For more information about HTA, please visit www.hawaiitourismauthority.org. Follow updates about HTA on Facebook, Twitter (@HawaiiHTA) and its YouTube Channel.

Media Contacts:

Charlene Chan

Director of Communications
Hawai‘i Tourism Authority
808-973-2272 (o)
808-781-7733 (m)
Charlene@gohta.net

Patrick Dugan

Senior Vice President
Anthology Marketing Group
808-539-3411 (o)
808-741-2712 (m)
Patrick.Dugan@AnthologyGroup.com