

FEMA Continues the Debris Removal Mission on Maui

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YouTube Video Here: [Lahaina Debris Removal: Clearing the Path for Recovery](#)

LAHAINA, Maui – Following the Maui wildfires on Aug. 8, 2023, debris removal cleanup has been one of the major challenges facing residents, business owners and government agencies during the recovery process.

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) was mission assigned by FEMA to complete both residential and commercial debris clearing for this disaster.

By Aug. 2024 debris and ash was cleared from all 1,390 residential properties. Then in Sept. 2024 the properties were transferred back to the County of Maui once soil sampling and erosion control measures were completed. This milestone allowed members of the community to apply for building permits and begin rebuilding. Following a six-month building process, the first family moved into their new home in Lahaina just in time for Thanksgiving.

The focus has now shifted to commercial debris removal. Currently, all but eight commercial properties in Lahaina have been cleared and completed. All commercial properties are projected to be completed by early 2025.

As debris clearing nears completion, Lahaina residents are seeing more of their town reopen and fewer trucks transporting debris to the Temporary Disposal Site in Olowalu, West Maui. Once a permanent debris storage site is available, FEMA will manage the transfer of debris and return the temporary site to its original condition.

Throughout the debris clearing process special consideration was given to the unique cultural context in Hawaiʻi.

“The culture in Hawaiʻi is so paramount that we could not ignore it when we were putting our debris plan together,” said Joseph Grunditz, FEMA Debris Task Force



Lead.

FEMA and USACE staff received cultural training and cultural monitoring is always conducted on site to protect Hawai'i's cultural heritage and honor Native Hawaiian traditions. Native Hawaiian, Maui-based cultural advisors were hired to lead this effort.

Historic properties also received special care. A designated USACE team assessed each historic landmark structure. One such structure is the Hawaiian Kingdom Courthouse that has been assessed and will be repaired. USACE serving as the project manager, has subcontracted 95% of work to local construction companies, supporting local economy.

Overall, USACE identified 29 historic and culturally significant properties that would require extra steps to save the buildings. Six of those properties were selected for a technique called shoring and bracing which will allow preservation of the remaining shells for restoration. Four of the six identified properties have been cleared of debris and completed.

As the mission continues FEMA and USACE remain committed to the local community and look forward to the future of Maui.

"I can't wait to see how the community rebuilds this beautiful town," said Joseph Grunditz, FEMA Debris Task Force Lead.

For the latest information on the Maui wildfire recovery efforts, visit mauicounty.gov, mauirecovers.org, fema.gov/disaster/4724 and [Hawaii Wildfires - YouTube](#). Follow FEMA on social media: [@FEMARegion9](#) and facebook.com/fema. You may also get disaster assistance information and download applications at sba.gov/hawaii-wildfires.



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