



**Hawaiian
Electric**

NEWS RELEASE

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Pact between Hawaiian Electric, nonprofit to fund critical Firewise positions, expand wildfire prevention outreach *\$50,000 installment paid to Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization*

HONOLULU, March 3, 2025 – Hawaiian Electric has partnered with Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization to help fund the nonprofit's Firewise coordinator positions that help galvanize communities to reduce wildfire risk across the state.

The first \$50,000 of a \$260,000 commitment was recently paid to HWMO, a nonprofit based on Hawai'i Island that is now overseeing 31 Firewise communities across three counties. HWMO locally administers the nationally recognized [Firewise USA program](#), which provides a framework to help communities organize and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and address wildfire risks.

"Our support of Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization is a valuable investment in strengthening community resilience across the five islands Hawaiian Electric serves," said Kurt Tsue, Hawaiian Electric director of community affairs. "Getting behind HWMO's community-driven wildfire mitigation efforts is critical as we work in parallel to upgrade our infrastructure to reduce the risk of ignition and protect our customers and communities."

Last week HWMO hosted the Hawai'i Wildfire Summit in Kona where more than 260 attendees learned about wildfire prevention efforts, collaborated with experts and community leaders, and planned actionable projects to build community resilience. Hawaiian Electric was a sponsor of the event.

Nani Barretto, HWMO co-executive director, said it initially took 10 years to onboard 15 Firewise communities. "Within 10 months of the Maui wildfires, we onboarded another 15," Barretto said. "As of last week, we have 31 nationally recognized sites across three counties and another 13 in the application process," she said, noting the funds from Hawaiian Electric help HWMO carry out its mission.

The funding comes at a time when HWMO's federal grants are ending, Barretto said, adding Hawaiian Electric and other local sources are filling in the gap.

Firewise program coordinators help communities think through what projects will reduce risk, provide technical assistance and bring communities together to share resources, among other responsibilities, Barretto said.

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Shelly Aina of the Waikōloa Village Association Firewise Committee, which has maintained its Firewise designation since 2016, said the funding that local entities provide to HWMO is invaluable. “The more they have, the more we have,” Aina said.

“We did a big fuel mitigation project,” Aina said, adding HWMO was pivotal in helping the committee come up with a plan to clear a fuel break last year. “It all goes back to HWMO,” Aina said of the Firewise committee’s successes.

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