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DOH CONTINUES TO RESPOND TO KONA LOW STORMS' IMPACTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HONOLULU — The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) continues to respond to the recent Kona Low storms, including environmental monitoring and vector control.

Environmental Monitoring

Floodwater and flood-carried mud and sediment likely contain pathogens, because floodwaters may pick up and transport these contaminants from the environment. Similar storm and flood events elsewhere have shown these contaminants are commonly present after major flooding. Because of this knowledge, well-established guidance is available on reducing health risks when cleaning up after a flood and how to safely clean homes and belongings.

DOH will conduct precautionary sampling and testing of nearshore waters, as well as flood-carried mud and sediment, to understand contaminant levels in the environment. In response to community concern regarding sewage and knowledge of flooding events, initial samples of

flood-carried mud and sediment will be collected from impacted communities where mud is being consolidated and will be tested for pathogens. Based on information on the Kona Low flooding, land use on the North Shore and other flood events around the country, DOH fully expects to find pathogens in flood-carried mud. Taking recommended precautions — like wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning exposed skin and washing hands after handling mud — greatly reduces health risks from the pathogens expected to be present.

DOH Hazard Evaluation and Environmental Response Office staff partnered with the City and County of Honolulu to conduct real-time air monitoring in impacted areas. This real-time monitoring indicated no levels of concern with respect to carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, volatile organic compounds, or flammability.

Promptly removing mud and cleaning and drying homes and other impacted areas after a flood are among the most important things individuals can do to remove contamination and prevent other hazards like mold from developing. Dry out belongings and mud outside in the sun. Direct sunlight helps reduce microbial survival on exposed surfaces. Porous materials may need to be discarded.

Impacted communities should not wait for test results to clean homes and impacted areas. Delays in cleaning floodwater and mud can increase the risk of mold and other hazards. Safe cleanup guidelines, including recommended PPE, are available at <https://health.hawaii.gov/konalowstorm/>.

Vector Control

DOH Vector Control Branch personnel are actively monitoring mosquito populations and taking targeted action in impacted areas, including trapping and testing mosquitoes to confirm that mosquitoes are not carrying vector-borne diseases. DOH personnel will be prepared to provide treatment and abatement for vectors where needed. Individuals are encouraged to remove standing water to the extent possible — and those with concerns about mosquitos due to these past storms should reach out to their local DOH Vector Control office, found at health.hawaii.gov/vcb.

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