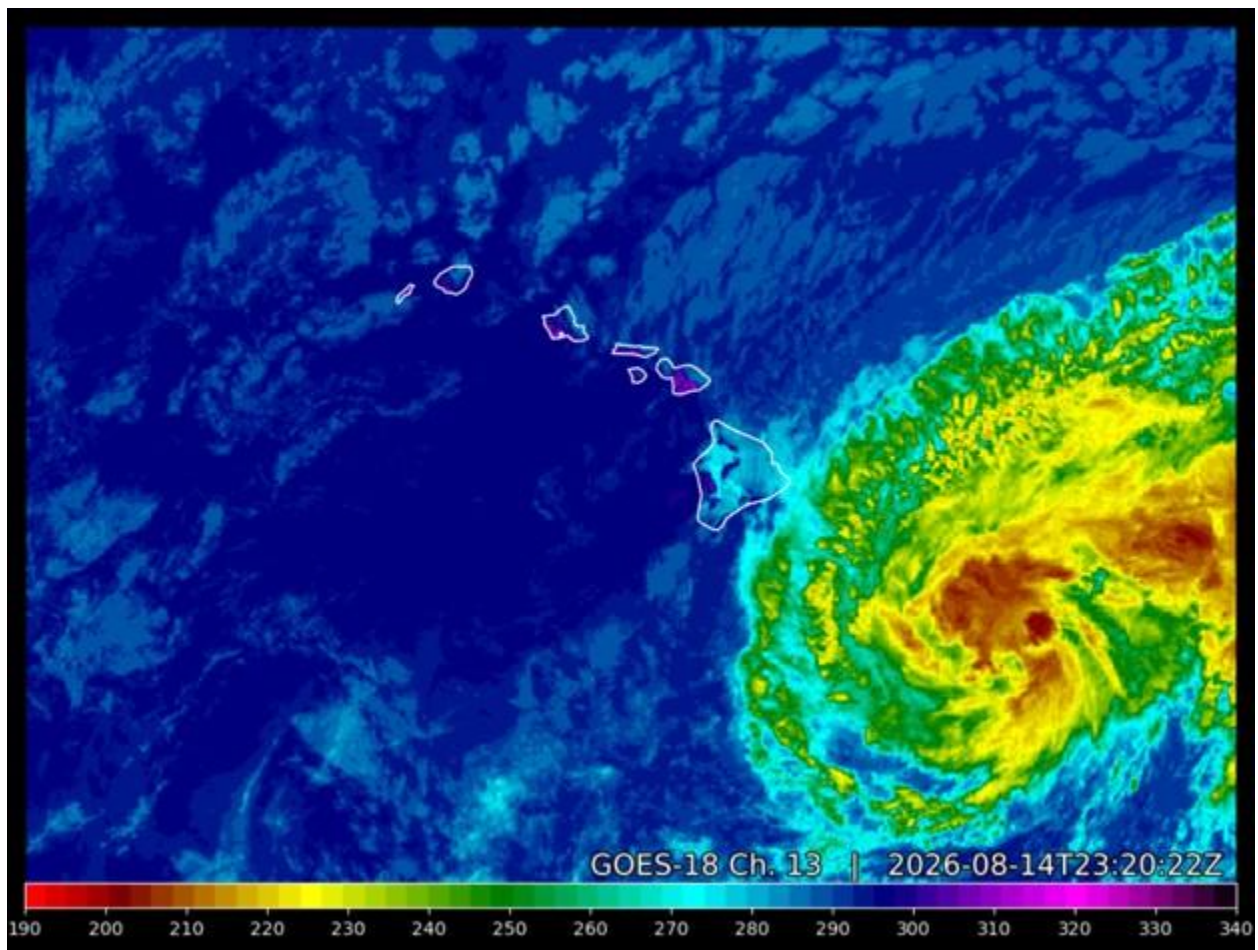




PMKCA September Newsletter

Little Radios have a Lala-lasting Impact

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By the time you read this article, Hurricane Lala may be a distant memory - or possibly replaced by the threat of another storm on a similar track. With Lala's experience fading, we remember that good preparation reduces risks, shortens recovery time, and saves lives.

Preparation at the community level involves finding communication capabilities that don't fail in disasters. Over this year, PMKCA members explored radio-based handheld devices to meet that need. But in our area that gets tricky; complex terrain can interfere. Simplistic early plans were augmented by adding a radio repeater in a central spot with enough power to reach all residents regardless of terrain.

By July, we had over two dozen folks licensed to use handheld GMRS (General Mobile Radio Service) radios, talking to each other clearly over our 15 square-mile area.

The experiment looked to have great potential in providing a communications backbone for emergency response and recovery efforts – should a major hurricane arrive. *“And just then, Hurricane Lala showed up.”* (Borrowing a quote from “Forrest Gump”.)

What began as an experiment to meet a hypothetical crisis turned into a critical component of our community's resilience. During the first 24 hours of Lala's worst effects, the GMRS net and the folks connected by their radios through the repeater, shared information across our roads, identified problems and found solutions, checked on neighbors who needed help and figured out how to help them.

Over the next three+ days (to this writing), the radio network continued to keep track of improvements in service, critical situations and vulnerable people. Wherever there were pockets with more durable resources – off-grid households and satellite-based communications, the web of support grew and diversified. Neighborliness flourished as people looked after each other.

It will be some time before our daily lives return to normal in mauka Pa'auilo and Kalōpā. County and utility crews are stretched thin. But the experiment to build a strong community-focused network of hand-held radios has proved its value and contributed to an inspiring community effort to “Leave no neighbor behind,” in a natural disaster.