Mayor Kawakami sends proposed amendment to Rule 23 to allow pre-travel testing exemptions for inter-island travel only

LĪHU’E – Today Mayor Derek S. K. Kawakami sent Governor David Ige a proposed amendment to Mayor’s Emergency Rule 23, which would rescind the county’s moratorium on the Safe Travels program for inter-island travel.

If approved, inter-island travelers would once again be allowed to participate in the state’s Safe Travels program and be exempt from the 10-day travel quarantine with proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken less than 72 hours before inter-island travel. The test would need to be administered by one of the state’s Trusted Testing and Travel Partners and test results uploaded to the state’s Safe Travels program before departure, as required by the state.

Amended Rule 23 would require that a person be physically present in the State of Hawai‘i for more than 72 hours before flying to Kaua‘i in order to qualify as an inter-island traveler. This means that travelers who arrive from out of state would not be eligible to participate in the Safe Travels program to Kaua‘i until they have been in Hawai‘i for more than three days.

The proposed amendment is set to take effect on Jan. 5, the same day as Rule 24, which establishes a post-travel testing program with a shorter quarantine for travelers who wish to stay in an approved Enhanced Movement Quarantine (EMQ) property, or “resort bubble.”
“We realize the Resort Bubble program is tailored to visitors and is not ideal for our residents,” said Mayor Kawakami. “Our residents continue to be our highest priority. Now that our community has been able to enjoy the holiday season without a major surge in cases, we feel we are in a good position to loosen inter-island travel restrictions and offer more convenient opportunities to travel between islands.”

It is not yet known when Kaua‘i’s moratorium on the Safe Travels program will end for Transpacific travelers.

“The rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths on the mainland continues to increase, with the number of cases this month nearly double the rate in November,” said Dr. Janet Berreman, M.D., Kaua‘i District Health Officer. “Unfortunately, it is just not safe at this time to allow transpacific travel to Kaua‘i without additional safeguards – we hope that will change soon. While O‘ahu, Maui, and Hawai‘i Island continue to have cases, the rate of infection is significantly lower than the mainland. With our low rates of disease and frontline healthcare workers and first responders beginning to be vaccinated, this is an appropriate time to allow inter-island travel with a pre-travel test, while continuing to require additional precautions for people who recently traveled out of state.”

It is not mandatory for travelers to participate in the Safe Travels program or the EMQ program. Those who choose not to participate in either program will be subject to the mandatory 10-day travel quarantine.

The county continues its modified quarantine program for critical infrastructure employees and those who must travel for medical needs. To apply for a modified quarantine or more information about travel to Kaua‘i and the Emergency Rules, please visit http://www.kauai.gov/COVID-19.

For more information on the state’s Safe Travels Program, or to view the list of Trusted Testing and Travel partners, visit hawaiicovid19.com/travel.

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