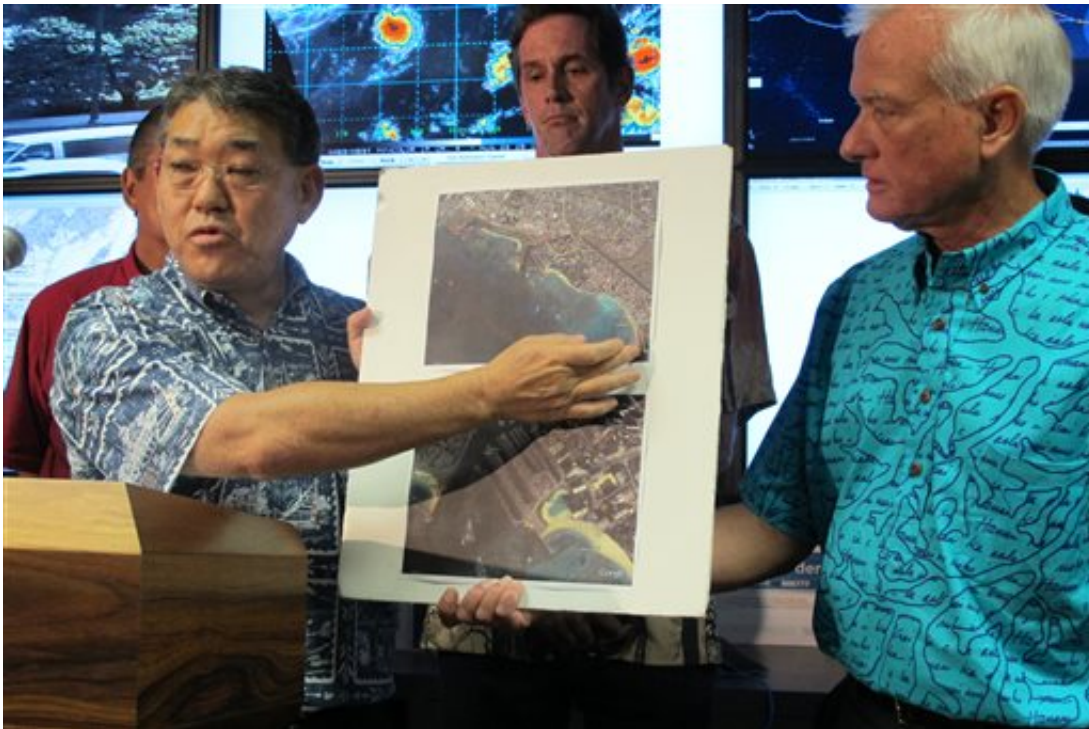


Hawaii officials reopen Waikiki beach after sewage spill

August 27 2015, by Caleb Jones And Audrey Mcavoy



Hawaii state Department of Health deputy director Keith Kawaoka, left, speaks during a news conference in Honolulu on Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2015, as Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell listens. Kawaoka pointed to locations where officials tested water quality in Honolulu after heavy rains triggered a sewage spill earlier in the week. (AP Photo/Audrey McAvoy)

Hawaii officials on Wednesday reopened world-renowned Waikiki beach after water quality tests showed bacteria levels there declined

since a large sewage spill nearby earlier this week.

Keith Kawaoka, the deputy director of the state Department of Health, said his agency had authorized Honolulu to take down [warning signs](#) from Waikiki and Ala Moana beaches.

"The indication is that the levels have come down dramatically from yesterday to indicate that we can open at least those beach areas," Kawaoka told reporters.

Heavy rain associated with Tropical Storm Kilo caused manhole covers in Honolulu to overflow with sewage and the Honolulu Zoo to flood on Monday.

This prompted officials to close a 4-mile stretch of waterfront, including the ocean fronting some of Hawaii's biggest hotels and the center of the state's tourism-driven economy.

Many tourists had to give up plans to swim in the ocean in the tourist district.

Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell said being able to reopen the area was a priority.

"We recognize—both at the state and county level—in terms of our economy there's nothing more important than Waikiki," he said. "We wanted to make sure that this event was over and it's over in basically two days and a little bit more."

Kawaoka said warning signs will remain at the Ala Wai and Kewalo boat harbors because water quality tests there indicated they were still affected by the spill. He said people should avoid coming into contact with the water in those areas.



Hawaii state Department of Health deputy director Keith Kawaoka speaks during a news conference in Honolulu on Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2015. Kawaoka pointed to locations where officials tested water quality in Honolulu after heavy rains triggered a sewage spill earlier in the week. (AP Photo/Audrey McAvoy)

Lori Kahikina, Honolulu's director of environmental services, said less sewage spilled than the half-million gallons the city initially reported.

She said Wednesday 129,000 gallons of wastewater flowed into the ocean. Another 264,000 spilled on land but never reached the ocean.

The spill occurred when storm water overwhelmed the city's sewage system. City officials say one of two sewage pumping stations serving the area was out of commission due to a construction project, leaving the [sewage](#) system without sufficient capacity to handle the increased water.

The city also blamed leaves and other debris that blocked storm drains.

Kahikina reiterated her regret that city departments hadn't better communicated with each other to ensure both pumping stations were operational. The contractor on the project has since brought the second pumping station online.

Even more rain was in the forecast.



Scott Murakawa, of the Hawaii Department of Health, takes a water quality sample at Ala Moana Beach Park in Honolulu, Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015. Stretches of Waikiki's white sands and blue waters were deserted Tuesday after officials warned that heavy rains triggered a half-million-gallon sewage spill near Hawaii's world-famous tourist district. (AP Photo/Audrey McAvoy)

The National Weather Service on Wednesday issued a flash flood for all of Oahu Island. A tropical storm east of Hawaii strengthened into a hurricane.

Hurricane Ignacio was centered about 1,275 miles east-southeast of Hilo late Wednesday with [maximum sustained winds](#) of 75 mph.



Tourists walks near a warning sign posted on Waikiki Beach, Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015, in Honolulu. Most of the famed beach fronting Waikiki was closed after heavy rains triggered a half-million gallon sewage spill near Hawaii's world-famous tourist district, officials said. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

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Citation: Hawaii officials reopen Waikiki beach after sewage spill (2015, August 27) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-08-hawaii-reopen-waikiki-beach-sewage.html>

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