

Around the

state

911 REPORT

Kauai man, 24, dies in vehicle crash in Lihue

A 24-year-old Kauai man died and a second person was critically injured in a single-vehicle crash in Lihue early Saturday morning, according to police.

At about 3:10 a.m., a 2003 Jeep Wrangler with two occupants was traveling east on Kaunualii Highway near the intersection of Kalepa Street when it struck a cement curb, collided with two traffic signal poles and overturned, Kauai Police Department officials said in a news release. Both occupants were ejected from the vehicle and taken to Wilcox Medical Center.

The driver, identified as Caden Garon, died from his injuries, police said.

His passenger was later transported to The Queen's Medical Center in critical condition, KPD said.

Speed appears to have contributed to the crash, and toxicology results are pending.

This was Kauai's fourth traffic fatality of 2026.

Hawaii island man, 64, dies in possible drowning off Kona

A 64-year-old Big Island man who had been picking opihi died Friday after being found unresponsive in the ocean off Kona, police said.

The Hawaii Police Department has identified the man as John Kauhahao of Kealahakua.

At 1:45 p.m., Kona officers responded to a report of an unresponsive man who had been brought ashore by a privately owned vessel, according to a police news release.

A friend who was with Kauhahao earlier that day told police he was last seen picking opihi along the Hokuia shoreline.

When Kauhahao could not be found, his friend asked for help finding him and used a boat to search the shoreline. Kauhahao was found underwater about 30 feet from the shoreline, near where he was last seen, according to police.

Kauhahao was retrieved from the water and transported to Keauhou Bay on the boat.

Hawaii Fire Department personnel and police responded, and the victim was taken to Kona Community Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Trial set for Kailua-Kona woman accused of tax fraud

A 74-year-old Kailua-Kona woman who faces multiple violations of state tax laws in regard to her housecleaning business pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Third Circuit Chief Judge Wendy DeWeese scheduled a jury trial for Aug. 11 for Georgia K. Santos.

Santos pleaded not guilty last month to five counts of willful failure to collect, account for and pay withholding taxes for Kahealani Property Services LLC and 12 counts of willful failure to file required state tax returns for general excise and withholding taxes.

DeWeese also scheduled a hearing at 10 a.m. July 10 regarding a motion filed by Mark Kawata, Santos' Honolulu-based attorney, to determine if statements Santos allegedly made to authorities in her case were done voluntarily.

The five failure to collect charges are Class C felonies that carry a maximum potential sentence of five years each, and are for tax years 2018 through 2022. The dozen failure to file returns charges are misdemeanors punishable by up to a year in jail and are for tax years 2018 to 2023.

The felony charges also carry a potential fine of \$100 per charge, while the misdemeanor charges carry potential fines of \$25,000 each.

Santos is listed as the sole proprietor of Kahealani Property Services by the Better Business Bureau. Court records indicate she has no prior criminal record in Hawaii.

She is free on \$10,000 bail.

Hawaii Tribune-Herald

SHIP AHoy!

Today's ship arrival:				
HONOLULU HARBOR				
AGENT	VESSEL	ETA	ETD	BERTH
PHT	Jean Anne	6 p.m.	—	sea to 1B

CORRECTIONS

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser strives to make its news report fair and accurate. If you have a question or comment about news coverage, call Marsha McFadden, managing editor/news, at 808-529-4759 or email city editors at cityeditors@staradvertiser.com.

State plans \$50M makeover for Big Isle's Kawaihae Harbor

By Stefan Verbano
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

The state Department of Transportation is planning to begin a more than \$50 million makeover of Kawaihae Harbor next year, including the widening of Kawaihae Road to build an 875-foot-long dedicated left turn and storage lane leading up to the harbor's entrance.

According to the project's draft environmental assessment, which anticipated a finding of "no significant impact," the work will help reduce traffic jams along the Kohala Coast corridor by expanding the roadway to allow through-traffic to bypass cargo trucks lined up to enter the harbor.

It will also add 2.3 acres of cargo yard storage capacity, replace worn out pavement with reinforced concrete, upgrade light poles and fire suppression systems, widen the facility's main gate, and relocate utility poles, perimeter fencing and office/maintenance buildings.

These renovations are being undertaken to address significant roadway congestion, container storage space restraints and aging infrastructure, according to the document. Such conditions affect the reliability and efficiency of the harbor, which can translate to "higher consumer costs, reduced availability of goods, and reduced operational safety for both harbor users and nearby communities."

Traffic backups along Kawaihae Road can become substantial during busy days at the harbor, where lines of cars and trucks can stretch for over a mile, past the intersection with Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway, also known as Highway 19. This causes major delays and headaches for residents and visitors frequenting the businesses, schools and beach parks surrounding the humble port town, as well as slowing harbor operations and creating safety hazards.



COURTESY PHOTO

Starting next year, Kawaihae Harbor will go undergo renovations including the widening of Kawaihae Road.

"This inter-modal connection between port and highway needs significant improvement to reduce this congestion and mitigate the negative impact to residents in the nearby communities that need to commute to work, school and other destinations," said DOT officials in an email to the Hawaii Tribune-Herald.

According to the department, design finalization and bidding will take place this summer, while the project contract will be awarded early next year, with groundbreaking tentatively scheduled for mid-2027. The work is anticipated to take roughly 24 months and be completed by mid-2029.

The EA document also lists emergency preparedness as a secondary motivation for making the improvements. In this scenario, a logistical disruption, public health crisis or natural disaster would render the Port of Hilo inoperable, forcing all ocean freight to Hawaii island to come through Kawaihae Harbor. This comprises the more than 90% of food and 95% of fuel consumed on the island.

"The resulting expanded capacity of Port of Kawaihae will be an important component to recovery efforts if Port of Hilo is ever inoperable due to an emergency or force majeure event," DOT officials said. "The Port of Kawaihae Harbor may need to operate as Hawaii island's

sole commercial port in a catastrophic event, and this project will provide sufficient facilities to handle emergency demands in the event a natural disaster strikes the east side of the island."

Shipping container cargo volumes at the harbor have surged over the past decade by nearly 75%, according to the department. This is being driven by a higher overall demand for goods based on population increases, paired with a shift in deliveries from the Port of Hilo to the Port of Kawaihae.

According to the EA, in 2021 shipping giant Matson switched from unloading its barges at both ports to exclusively using Kawaihae to reduce fuel costs incurred by motoring halfway around the island to reach Hilo. It now brings its containers to East Hawaii locations via semi-truck.

This shift has caused the Pier 2 Terminal at Kawaihae to exceed its yard capacity, creating greater congestion and forcing shipping operators to "double handle" cargo, where containers are moved more times than necessary before they reach their final destination. As Matson's cargo is no longer divided between the two ports, empty containers are stored exclusively in the Kawaihae yard until they can be returned to Honolulu Harbor on outbound barges.

Such significant increase

in container volume and truck movement has had knock-on effects for different parts of the harbor's infrastructure, including extensive asphalt deterioration from more traffic moving in and out of the yard.

"Approximately half of the yard surface has potholes, compression marks, depressions and cracks which slows down the efficient movement of cargo," according to DOT.

In a clear example of how this increase in cargo traffic has affected the port, empty containers are at times stacked higher than the 40-foot-high light poles meant to illuminate them. This makes workers only able to load some empty containers on waiting barges when there's sufficient daylight, a significant problem during winter months.

As a result, loading sometimes can't be finished before barges are scheduled to depart, forcing them to leave the harbor and head back to Honolulu only partially full, leading to further delays and additional costs. A lack of sufficient lighting also poses safety risks.

"Poorly lit areas create unsafe working conditions," DOT officials said in the email. "The project will improve lighting conditions by replacing antiquated lighting fixtures and by adding additional lighting fixtures where there are none currently."

The improvement project would replace these too-short light poles with 80-foot-tall poles utilizing energy efficient LED bulbs that are compliant with county ordinances.

A \$23.5 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration was awarded to Hawaii DOT in 2023 to partially fund the project, as part of its Port Infrastructure Development Program. The remaining funds will come from DOT's Harbor Special Fund, which is made up of harbor user fees.

Over 1,000 students participate at annual career fair

By John Berger
jberger@staradvertiser.com

More than 1,100 middle school, high school, and college students from nine Honolulu schools and universities recently filled the Saint Louis School gym to explore career paths, connect with employers, and apply for real-world opportunities at the second annual Exposure Fair and Hiring Blitz.

Presented by workforce development nonprofit ClimbHI in partnership with Chaminade University and Saint Louis School, the event held on April 27 brought together more than 70 local businesses and organizations to introduce students to internships, apprenticeships, job training, and immediate employment opportunities. Designed to strengthen Hawaii's local talent pipeline, the Exposure Fair and Hiring Blitz aimed to help students identify viable career pathways while connecting employers with future workers who want to live and work in Hawaii.

Students participated from William P. Jarrett Middle School, Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School, Saint Louis School, Kalani High School, Kaimuki High School, Kula Kaiapuni 'O Anuenue School, Chaminade University, Kapi'olani Community College, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Julie Morikawa, ClimbHI president, said, "We had over 70 businesses — I call them organizations — offering apprenticeships and post-secondary (programs),



PHOTOS BY GEORGE F. LEE / GLEE@STARADVERTISER.COM

Veteran operator Jason Kahaialii directed Saint Louis School student Jensen Tavai on a virtual backhoe during the Exposure Fair and Hiring Blitz on Monday at Saint Louis School Gym. At left, Amy Oshiro of Malu Productions helped a Saint Louis School student weave lauhala as an introduction to the local entertainment industry. The event was aimed at high school and college students selecting career pathways.

businesses, associations and nonprofit organizations to sign up for the free ClimbHI Bridge online portal for workforce development, classroom engagement opportunities, volunteer hour tracking, and communication tools.

Visit climbhi.org.

as well as straight to work (opportunities)."

Exposure Fairs help students in middle and high school acquire the tools and make the connections to select the career pathways that will help them reach economic self-sufficiency and achieve their dreams. The events offer prescreened businesses and organizations the ability to meet students in short "speed-dating" style segments and in informal Q&A sessions.

Hiring Blitz events are designed to expedite the hiring process for high school juniors and seniors by connecting them with available opportunities that connect students with career paths that offer economic self-sufficiency with a clear progression plan.

"All different kinds of options are there," Morikawa said. "We're trying to keep our kids employed and home (in Hawaii) if they want to. That's the whole point of this."

ClimbHI invites teachers,