



**HAWAII LODGING & TOURISM**  
**A S S O C I A T I O N**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ANNUAL VISITOR PUBLIC SAFETY CONFERENCE CONVENES IN DECEMBER**

*Event focuses on addressing safety concerns affecting visitors and residents*

**HONOLULU** — The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association and partner organizations are hosting the 2023 Visitor Public Safety Conference on Wednesday, December 6 at the Hawai'i Convention Center. The conference begins with a breakfast at 7:15 a.m. and will end by noon. The event aims to discuss crime prevention, emergency responses, updates on the Safe & Sound Waikiki initiative that was started last year, and other topics affecting both the visitor industry and Hawai'i residents.

“This annual conference is a collaboration with law enforcement, government officials, nonprofits, and other stakeholders, with the utmost priority of keeping everyone safe,” stated Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association President and CEO Mufi Hannemann. “VPSC was the impetus behind creating a Weed & Seed program in Waikiki. We were early and outspoken advocates and I am very pleased that the net result was Safe & Sound Waikiki. Tourism is currently the largest industry in the state, and it is crucial that we all come together to address crime surges that can heavily affect our visitors who come to Hawai'i, as well as the individuals who make up the sector's workforce.”

One of the many organizations sponsoring the conference is the Waikiki Business Improvement District. “WBID has been a key player in coordinating and funding public safety measures within Waikiki. Our Aloha Ambassador team has been a staple in the Waikiki community, providing safety and hospitality assistance to residents and visitors for over 20 years,” stated Trevor Abarzua, president and executive director of WBID.

“What is new this past year is our involvement with Safe & Sound Waikiki, where our organization plays an integral role in coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders involved in the initiative. We worked through the VPSC initially to bring the program to Waikiki. With a grant

provided by the Kosasa Foundation and the City and County of Honolulu, the WBID was able to hire an Executive Coordinator of Safe & Sound, Katie Kaahanui, to project manage the efforts. The WBID has also invested in houseless and mental health outreach through our Aloha Ambassador team, as well as through a partnership with the Institute for Human Services (IHS) to provide specific care and services to houseless individuals within Waikiki. Through these initiatives, the WBID is part of the solution when it comes to our communities' toughest challenges, whether that be through direct work or investment," said Abarzua.

According to Jessica Lani Rich, president and executive director of the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawai'i, "the Visitor Public Safety Conference is an important event where we have many agencies in collaboration to make sure that our visitors know we care and are working together to continue to make Hawai'i one of the safest travel destinations in the world."

The first Visitor Public Safety Conference was held in 2018, in response to heightened public safety concerns in the visitor industry. It was modeled after the Waikiki Crime Summit that was started in 1997; that conference yielded the creation of WBID and the Aloha Ambassadors.

Since its inception, the conference has addressed pressing issues facing the community and provided solutions for these concerns. One year the P.E.A.C.E. program (Proactive Enforcement Against Criminal Elements) was announced by the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) during the conference. P.E.A.C.E. uses education, outreach, and zero tolerance enforcement to tackle chronic issues within the Waikiki district, most notably homelessness.

In another year there was an incident when some residents who were at the corner of Lewers Street and Kalākaua Avenue were physically attacked and robbed. This report came on the heels of several high-profile crimes in the area including the murder of a 20-year-old man in nearly the same location. These criminal activities initiated a series of briefings led by the Visitor Industry Public Safety Coalition that brought together HPD, the military, area businesses, Adult Friends for Youth, the Waikiki Neighborhood Board, public officials and the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA). As a result, reduction in crime occurred in this area and other ideas came to fruition, such as installing more security cameras and better lighting in certain parts of Waikiki.

The Visitor Public Safety Conference is sponsored by the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Hawai'i Tourism Authority, Waikiki Improvement Association, Hawai'i Hotel Visitor Industry Security Association, and the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawai'i. Registration for the event is now available online through [this link](#).

### **About the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association**

Established in 1947, the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA) is the state's largest private organization representing hotels, condominiums, timeshares, other lodging entities, suppliers, and related firms and individuals with a connection to tourism. A 501(c)(6) association with over 700 member organizations, HLTA is dedicated to supporting the tourism

industry through education, advocacy, and philanthropy. For more information, visit HLTA's [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or website at [www.hawaiilodging.org](http://www.hawaiilodging.org).

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