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AMERICAN NEWS Aug 24, 2023

REVEALED: Maui officials tried to enforce media BLACKOUT to block footage from devastating wildfires

"At this time, we have not been asked to take any photos or videos down."

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PM. **Libby Emmons**
Brooklyn NY

Aug 24, 2023
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A leaked letter from the US Department of Homeland Security reveals that FEMA was asked by officials on the Hawaiian island of Maui to "pause on posting on social media and elsewhere new imagery of damage/disaster/debris starting now."

The letter, revealed in a screenshot on X by Anthony Cabassa, was sent August 19, more than 10 days after the wildfires ripped through the town of Lahaina, officially killing more than 100, but leaving nearly 1,000 missing and unaccounted for.

The disaster footage from Lahaina shows a devastated community that once was home to 13,000. The area is flattened by fires, homes reduced to ash, and bodies, many likely charred beyond recognition, in the debris.

"They are asking for a full stop in disaster imagery going forward," the letter from Justin Angel Knighten of FEMA continues. "At this time, we have not been asked to take any photos or videos down. Our team on the ground is coordinating with the County for further guidance to ensure we remain fully

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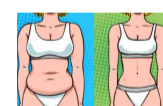
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EXCLUSIVE 🚫 | A person wishing to stay anonymous has sent me this email by FEMA sent to their nonprofit who is headed to Maui to help with disaster relief.

They say they are being asked to STOP posting any images or videos while on the ground effective immediately.

7:16 PM · Aug 21, 2023

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Footage was posted to social media by survivors of the fires. Charred cars stuck in traffic jams on one of the only roads out of town, burnt homes that likely contain the unidentifiable remains of the dead, as well as survivors speaking about their ordeals, all ended up online.

The disaster response from Maui officials was also called out on social media. An official who was in charge of making sure there was enough water to fight the fires [sat on a request](#) to divert water to protect people and homes for five hours while waiting for a report from a local farmer as to the impact of that water diversion.

Another official said that he declined to [sound warning sirens](#) to alert residents of the imminent danger because the sirens have historically been used for tsunamis defended the position. It also turned out that the warning system itself was faulty. Residents said that if only they'd had another 10-15 minutes notice, families could have been saved. Some families perished entirely while they were in their homes or cars with absolutely no way to escape.

Hawaii Governor Josh Green said later that he wished the sirens had been sounded. Instead, first responders went door to door to alert residents that they should evacuate.

It was later revealed, as the number of missing stayed high and it came to be known that [many children](#) home alone due to school closures as a result of power outages, that three Maui disaster response officials were [not even on Maui](#), but on the island of Oahu attending a FEMA disaster relief training. They did not even get on a call about the fires until 5 hours after they began the morning of August 8.

As an additional result of those power failures, work crews were out in Lahaina trying to repair those lines, and in so doing actually [barricaded](#) roads preventing people from leaving in their cars. This caused hefty traffic jams, leaving people stranded while they tried to evacuate, or heading back into the flames in Lahaina. At least one family was known to have [burned to death](#) in their car, along with their 7-year-old son.

The [power company](#) itself is also facing scrutiny for not having cut the current to the power lines as the wind picked up. Another video posted on social media by a Lahaina resident shows electric poles bending over to the ground, wires touching dry brush, smoke, and flames igniting as a result.

But Maui officials, "out of respect for those who perished," do not want the public to see that.

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