



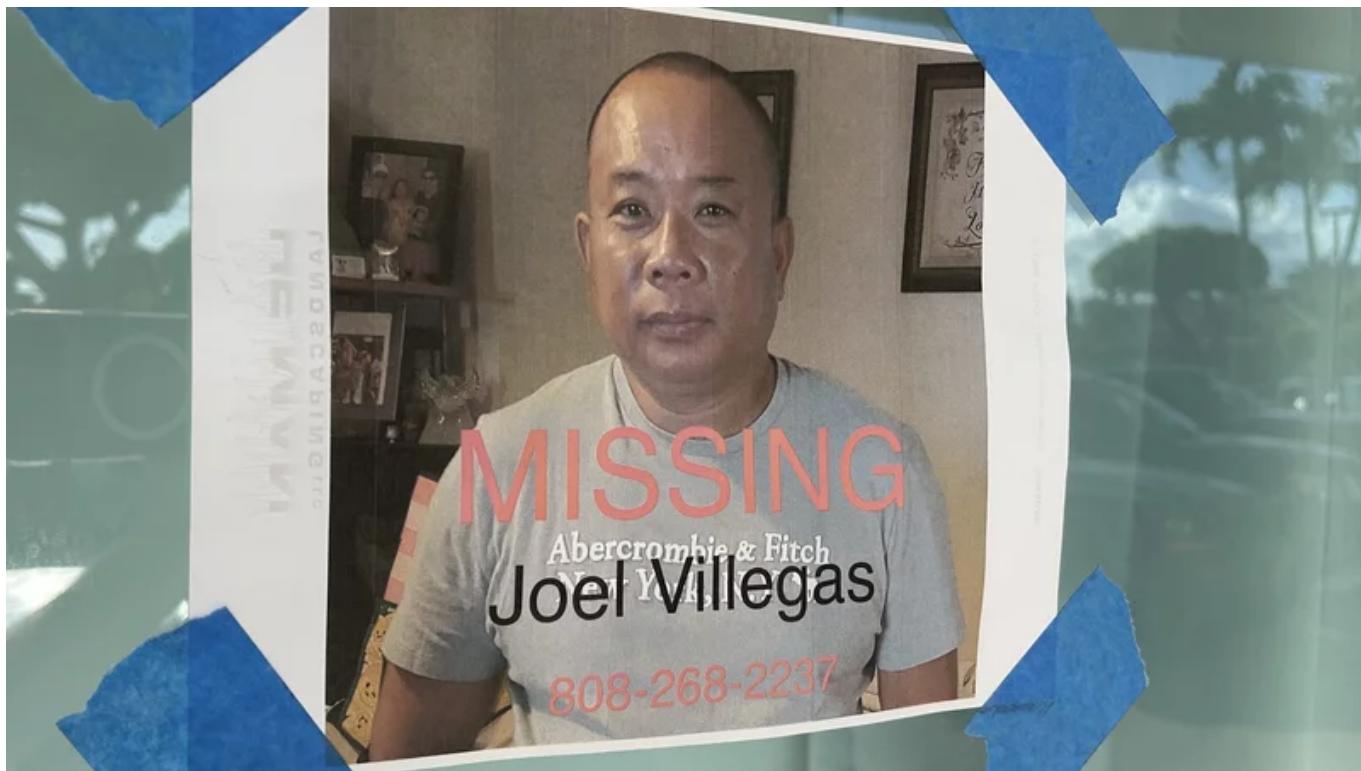
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388: The number of people unaccounted for in Maui fire falls by more than half

August 25, 2023 · 6:33 AM ET

By Bill Chappell



A poster seeking help finding a man not seen after the Lahaina fire is taped to a store window. The official figure of people listed as "not accounted for" has changed drastically this week.

Bill Chappell/NPR

MAUI, Hawaii — The number of people listed as "unaccounted for" after the Aug. 8 wildfire in Lahaina now has 388 names on it — a sharp drop from earlier this week, when the number topped 1,000 — according to Maui County officials.

In another change, the county for the first time published what it calls a "validated list," sharing the names of people it says have not been accounted for.

"We're releasing this list of names today because we know that it will help with the investigation," Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said, even as he acknowledged that publishing the names would likely cause distress.

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"We also know that once those names come out, it can and will cause pain for folks whose loved ones are listed," he added. "This is not an easy thing to do, but we want to make sure that we are doing everything we can to make this investigation as complete and thorough as possible."

Some of the names on the list have previously been published, appearing in an online spreadsheet that grew out of the Maui community's grassroots effort to locate loved ones. But in some cases, the names do not overlap.

The drive to "un-duplicate people"

The revised number emerged late Thursday after Hawaii Gov. Josh Green said the FBI was working to "un-duplicate people" who were reported missing. By checking formal

names and taking other steps, Green predicted, the number would "decrease very significantly."



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It's the third big fluctuation in the number of people whose whereabouts are uncertain. This week started with Maui County Mayor Richard Bissen saying the number had fallen to 850. But soon afterward, FBI Special Agent in Charge Steven Merrill said the unaccounted-for list had "between 1,000 and 1,100" names on it.

Merrill said the effort was complicated by two main factors: the lack of detail in some reports and a wide variety of lists of unaccounted-for people, ranging from government agencies to logs kept by shelters.

The death toll did not budge

While the number of unaccounted-for people has shifted, another number has held steady for much of this week: 115, the death toll in the tragedy that makes these fires the deadliest in the past 100 years in the United States.

As of Thursday, the remains of 46 people had been identified, according to the Maui Police Department. Families have been located and notified of their loss in 35 of those cases.

Officials have repeatedly urged parents, siblings and children of people whose whereabouts are unknown to give DNA samples to help analysts identify remains that have been recovered.



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To provide a DNA sample from an oral swab, people on Maui can go to the family assistance center, in a ballroom at the Hyatt Regency in Kaanapali. Relatives who live on other islands or the continental U.S. can call the FBI at (808) 566-4300 or send an email to HN-COMMAND-POST@ic.fbi.gov for guidance about providing a sample.

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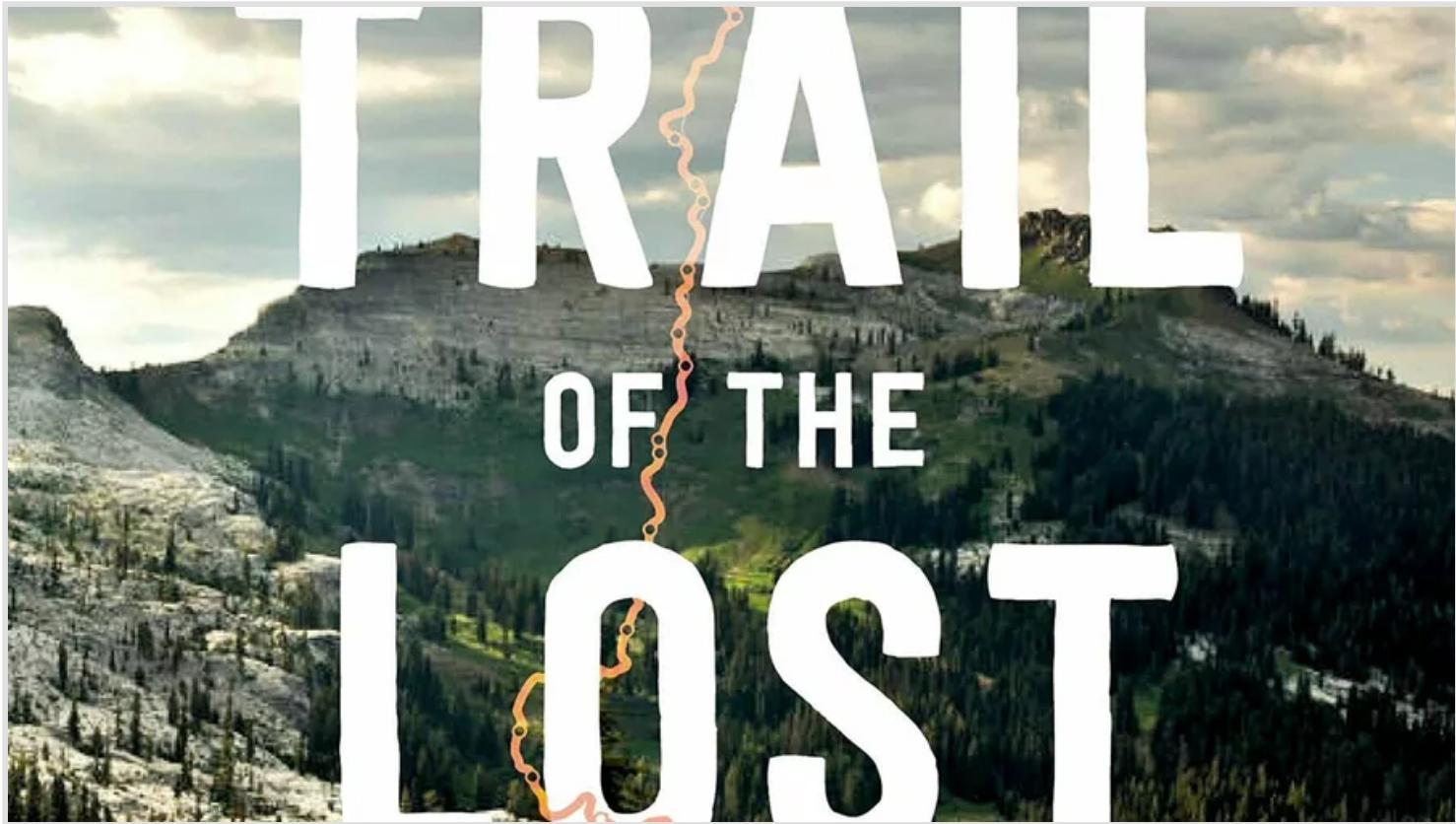
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