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Hawaii Wildfires 2023
August 14, 2023. Wailuku,
Hawaii.

Edwin Heilscher chokes up while telling American Red Cross staff member Doyle Rader how he, his wife, son and his neighbor escaped the deadly wildfire that destroyed Lahaina on the island of Maui. Given the dry conditions on West Maui, Heilscher didn't think much about the smoke he briefly smelled the morning of the fire. But after the wind picked up later in the day and he started seeing ash and soot blow in through the window of his apartment on Front Street, he knew something was wrong. "I walked into the kitchen, and we got a kitchen window right above the sink, and it's just a blast of really hot air," Heilscher said. "And I'm looking out, and it's a lot of smoke, and there's flying embers flying into the parking lot. So, I open up the back door, and I say, 'Grab your stuff!'"

Driving through Lahaina to the highway, buildings around them were catching fire. "As we made our right turn to go out to the highway, we noticed the building on the corner, a small apartment complex; we noticed that that's already on fire," Heilscher said.

After several days and nights of trying to find a more stable sheltering situation, Heilscher brought his family and neighbor to the Red Cross Shelter at the

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