

Lava spews 100 feet from Hawaii volcano's new vent

March 8 2011, By JAYMES SONG , Associated Press



Scientists fly in a helicopter above the Pu'u O'o vent on Kilauea Volcano on Sunday, March 6, 2011 in Hawaii. Scientists say the Pu'u O'o crater floor has collapsed and an eruption occurred along the middle of Kilauea Volcano's east rift zone. Scientists at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory say after a fissure broke out around 5 p.m. Saturday, lava was seen erupting up to 65 feet high. (AP Photo/Tim Wright)

(AP) -- Glowing, red-orange lava is shooting into the sky, creating fiery rivers from the newest vent at Kilauea volcano on Hawaii's Big Island.

A new fissure cracked opened Saturday and continued erupting Monday,

creating a powerful, spectacular and destructive show by Mother Nature at one of the world's most active volcanoes. Propelled by jets of gas, [lava](#) was seen reaching as high as 100 feet high Sunday.

"Fissure eruptions by their nature are exciting because you see lava spattering from this ground crack reaching impressive heights," volcanologist Janet Babb said. "It's not something we see every day, so it does generate a lot of excitement."

Kilauea, which means "spewing" or "much spreading," in Hawaiian, has been in constant eruption since Jan. 3, 1983.

The newest eruption was spotted by a geologist during a flyover shortly after the floor at the Pu'u 'O'o crater collapsed Saturday afternoon.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said the new fissure is located on the middle east rift zone between Pu'u 'O'o and Napau crater. The last fissure eruption in the area was in 1997.

The U.S. Geological Survey has issued a volcano warning alert, meaning a hazardous eruption is imminent, under way or suspected in the remote, barren area.

Scientists said areas near the [vent](#) could erupt or collapse without warning, posing a threat to visitors or hikers to the area. Rocks and lava could be ejected several hundred yards, and ash and potentially lethal concentrations of [sulfur dioxide](#) gas could travel about a half-mile downwind.

Because of the latest activity, with 2,000-degree lava creating intense heat and torching small trees, the [Hawaii](#) Volcanoes National Park has closed Chain of Craters Road and all east rift zone and coastal trails. Kulanaokuaiki campground was also closed until further notice.

The slopes of Pu`u `O'o, all ledges, benches and beaches formed at active lava entry points on the coast, as well as specific active lava areas as posted, are closed to visitors. There were also flight restrictions in the area.

No homes or structures were threatened.

Scientists said seismic activity in the summit and east rift zone remained significantly elevated with 18 earthquakes recorded in the past day, 10 of which were clustered near the fissure eruption.

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