Hawaii volcano lava wave nears homes

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Breakouts of lava from Hawaii's Kilauea volcano are seen near the West end of Wilipe, Hawaii, on July 31, 2002

Smoldering lava from a slow-erupting volcano has reached within yards (several meters) of homes on Hawaii's Big Island, emergency officials said Monday as villagers braced to evacuate.

The lava flow from the Kilauea volcano has been threatening nearby homes for weeks, and was 100 yards (91 meters) from the nearest house by early Monday. The lava front was moving at between 10-15 yards (9-14 m) an hour.

"Based on the current flow location, direction and advancement, residents in the flow path were placed on an evacuation advisory," said the County of Hawaii's Civil Defense force in an online update.

The slow-moving waves of lava, burning everything in its path, had advanced some 275 yards (251 m) in the past 24 hours towards Pahoa town, on the eastern tip of the island, officials said.

Hawaii County Mayor Billy Kenoi declared a state of emergency last month after the lava advanced to within a mile (1.6 km) of a residential area known as the Ka'ohe Homesteads.

Last week, Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie requested a Presidential Disaster Declaration to unlock federal resources to help local emergency protective measures.

As the lava threatens a main road in the area, measures needed include providing alternative routes and accommodating some 900 children that will be displaced by the lava, according to Abercrombie's office.

Hawaii Island, or the Big Island, is the largest of the eight main islands which make up the Pacific US state—an archipelago that includes hundreds of smaller volcanic islands.