

Light coats of gritty ash fall near erupting Hawaii volcano

May 18 2018, by Caleb Jones And Sophia Yan



Lindsey Magnani, center, her finance Elroy Rodrigues, left, and their children, Kahele, right, and Kayden, not shown, pick up respirators to help protect against ash from Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. Free respirators were being handed out to communities around the volcano after it erupted early Thursday, sending a plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the air. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)

Authorities handed out around 2,000 masks for protection as people living near Hawaii's Kilauea volcano braced for pulverized rock, glass and crystal to rain down after an explosive eruption at the peak's summit.

Lindsey Magnani, her fiance Elroy Rodrigues and their two children picked up masks for their family Thursday afternoon at Cooper Center in Volcano, Hawaii.

Magnani said both of her children—Kahele Rodrigues, 2, and Kayden Rodrigues, 3 months old—were doing OK, but her and her fiance had both been sneezing all day.

"This morning it smelled like sulfur so we had to close all the windows," Magnani said.

Most residents found only thin coatings of ash, if they saw any at all, as winds blew much of the 30,000-foot (9,100-meter) plume away from people.

"It was a grit, like a sand at the beach," said Joe Laceby, who lives in the town of Volcano a few miles to the northeast of Kilauea's summit. The ash was a bit of an irritant, he said, but "not too bad."

Laceby sealed windows and cracks in his home with cellophane wrap to keep out ash and volcanic gases. He has gas masks to protect himself from the toxic fumes and ash.

The explosion at Kilauea's summit came shortly after 4 a.m. Thursday following two weeks of volcanic activity that sent lava flows into neighborhoods and destroyed at least 26 homes. Scientists said the eruption was the most powerful in recent days, though it probably lasted only a few minutes.



People watch as ash rises from the summit crater of Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)

Geologists have warned that the volcano could become even more violent, with increasing ash production and the potential that future blasts could hurl boulders the size of cows from the summit.

Winds kept the ash away from the Volcano Winery, tasting room manager Lani Delapenia said. A thin coating of white soot had blanketed tables and vines the day before, on Wednesday, but none wafted over the day of the 30,000-foot plume. The strength and direction of the wind makes all the difference, she said.

"The Volcano Village, and us at the winery, are doing well and we hope people still come and visit us and order wine because we are still pumping wine out," Delapenia said.

The vineyard also has a great view of the plume, she said.

Julia Neal, operator of Pahala Plantation Cottages about 28 miles (45 kilometers) southwest of the summit crater, said people have been picking up ash masks from county civil defense workers at the local community center. Some people working outside were wearing them. People with asthma were staying inside, she said.



Marie Brant, of Laguna Niguel, Calif., watches as ash rises from the summit crater of Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. Brant is on vacation in Hawaii. The volcano on Hawaii's Big Island erupted anew Thursday shortly after 4 a.m. with little sound and only modest fury, spewing a steely gray plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the sky that began raining down on a nearby town. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)

The eruption reminded her of 2008, when Kilauea also had large summit

eruptions and sent ash and gas over her community.

A light dusting fell Thursday, but the town had more ash a couple of days ago when people had to wash it off their cars, she said.

"People are renovating one of the historic buildings across the street. The school kids just stopped by. They're getting ready to graduate. Life is going on quite vibrantly here with people taking these precautions," she said.

The National Weather Service issued an ash advisory and then extended it through early evening, and county officials distributed ash masks to area residents. Several schools closed because of the risk of elevated levels of sulfur dioxide, a volcanic gas.

Dr. Josh Green, a state senator who represents part of the Big Island, said the immediate health risk comes from ash particles in the air. Anyone with respiratory difficulties, such as asthma or emphysema, should limit exposure to the ash, he said.



Joe Laceby, 47, of Volcano, Hawaii, watches as ash rises from the summit crater of Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. Laceby said he has sealed up his home and has gas masks to protect himself from the volcanic gases and ash that is falling in the area. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)

The Federal Aviation Administration extended a restriction on aircraft from entering the airspace up to 30,000 feet above sea level. The earlier limit was up to 10,000 feet (3,000 meters). The prohibition applies to a 5-mile (8-kilometer) radius around the crater.

Thursday's eruption did not affect the Big Island's two largest airports in Hilo and in Kailua-Kona.

The crater spewing ash sits within Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which has been closed since May 11 as a safety precaution over risks of a violent eruption.

Scientists warned May 9 that a drop in the lava lake at the summit might create conditions for a large explosion. Geologists predicted such a blast would mostly release trapped steam from flash-heated groundwater.

Kilauea has also been erupting lava into neighborhoods 25 miles (40 kilometers) to the east of the summit crater since May 3. It opened a new lava vent in the area—the 21st such fissure—on Thursday.

Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, has been erupting continuously since 1983. It's among the five volcanoes that form the Big Island, and it's the only one actively erupting. In 1924, an eruption killed one person and sent rocks, ash and dust into the air for 17 days.



People watch as ash rises from the summit crater of Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. The volcano on Hawaii's Big Island erupted anew Thursday shortly after 4 a.m. with little sound and only modest fury, spewing a steely gray plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the sky that began raining down on a nearby town. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



Marie Brant, of Laguna Niguel, Calif., watches as ash rises from the summit crater of Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. Brant is on vacation in Hawaii. The volcano on Hawaii's Big Island erupted anew Thursday shortly after 4 a.m. with little sound and only modest fury, spewing a steely gray plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the sky that began raining down on a nearby town. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



Joe Laceby, 47, of Volcano, Hawaii, watches as ash rises from the summit crater of Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. Laceby said he has sealed up his home and has gas masks to protect himself from the volcanic gases ash that is falling in the area. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



In this Thursday, May 17, 2018 image released by the U.S. Geological Survey, a Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, HVO geologist monitors the the vertical offset across the cracks on Nohea Street in Leilani Estates in Pahoia, Hawaii. Cracks caused by the underlying intrusion of magma expanded significantly during the past 24 hours, some with horizontal and vertical offsets, into the lower East Rift Zone in the Big Island of Hawaii. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)



This Thursday, May 17, 2018, aerial image released by the U.S. Geological Survey, shows Fissure 17 at about 07:00 a.m. HST., in Pahoia, Hawaii. The HVO field crew reported that the spattering height and intensity at Fissure 17 seemed to have intensified slightly from yesterday, but the length of active spattering in the fissure is shorter. The overall vigor of Fissure 17 appears to have dropped over the past two days, accompanying a stalling of the Fissure 17 flow front. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)



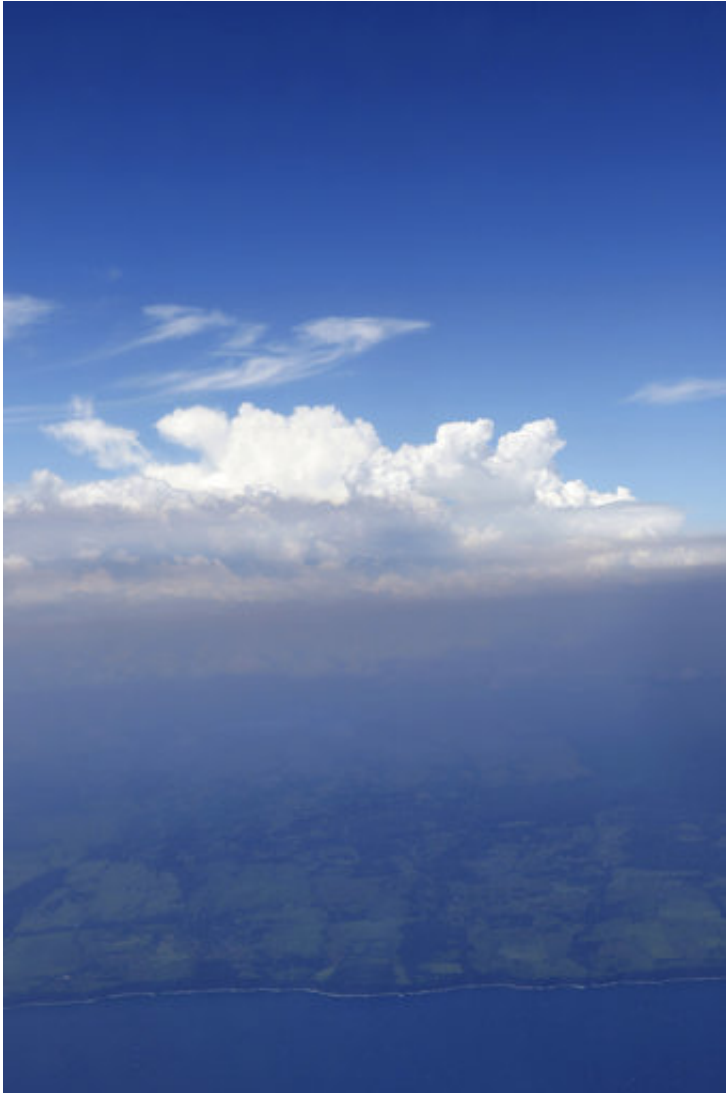
This Thursday, May 17, 2018, aerial image released by the U.S. Geological Survey, shows a view of ground cracks on Pohoiki Road during an overflight of the eruptive fissure area at about 7:00 a.m. HST near Pahoia, Hawaii. Cracks continued to open and widen, some with horizontal and vertical offsets, in the area during the past 24 hours. These cracks are caused by the underlying intrusion of magma into the lower East Rift Zone in the Big Island of Hawaii. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)



This Thursday, May 17, 2018 image provided by the U.S. Geological Survey shows a view of the ash plume resulting from an early morning explosion at Kilauea Volcano, in Hawaii. The volcano has erupted from its summit, shooting a dusty plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the sky. Mike Poland, a geophysicist with the U.S. Geological Survey, confirmed the explosion on Thursday. It comes after more than a dozen fissures recently opened miles to the east of the crater and spewed lava into neighborhoods. (U.S. Geological Survey/HVO via AP)



Clouds, ash and volcanic gases hang over Hawaii's Big Island, Thursday, May 17, 2018, after Kilauea volcano erupted from the summit crater earlier in the day. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



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Cones and signs warn of cracks in the road near the entrance to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Thursday, May 17, 2018, near Volcano, Hawaii. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



Lindsey Magnani and her son Kahele Rodrigues, 2, listen as an official shows them how to use a respirator that was given to them to help protect against ash from Kilauea volcano, Thursday, May 17, 2018, in Volcano, Hawaii. Free respirators were being handed out to communities around the volcano after it erupted early Thursday, sending a plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the air. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



A respirator to help protect against ash from Kilauea volcano sits on a desk at a distribution center in Volcano, Hawaii, on Thursday, May 17, 2018. Free respirators were being handed out to communities around the volcano after it erupted early Thursday, sending a plume of ash about 30,000 feet into the air. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)

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