

Latest lava flow destroys 4 homes, sparks evacuation prep

May 19 2018, by Caleb Jones



Peter Vance, 24, photographs lava erupting in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoa, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

Lava creeping across roadways destroyed four homes and left dozens of others in the shadow of Hawaii's Kilauea volcano isolated Saturday,

forcing more residents to plan for a possible evacuation.

Hawaii County Civil Defense said a fissure near the neighborhood of Lanipuna Gardens has been continuously erupting, releasing a slow-moving [lava](#) flow. If that lava threatens a nearby highway, more people will be told to prepare for voluntary evacuation.

On Friday, fast-moving lava crossed a road and isolated about 40 homes in a rural subdivision, forcing at least four people to be evacuated by county and National Guard helicopters.

The wide lava flow was "very active" Saturday morning and advancing at rates of up to 300 yards (274 meters) per hour, scientists from the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said.

Police, firefighters and National Guard troops were securing the area of the Big Island and stopping people from entering, Hawaii County Civil Defense reported. The homes were isolated in the area east of Lanipuna Gardens and Leilani Estates. Both neighborhoods had 40 structures, including 26 homes, decimated by lava over the past two weeks.

Three people still in that area Friday night were initially advised to shelter in place and await rescue by helicopter first thing Saturday. Since then, two of them got out on their own in the morning and one was evacuated by air, said Janet Snyder, spokeswoman for Hawaii County.



As lava activity erupts in the background, cars drive down Hwy 132, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoia, HI. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

"They shouldn't be in that area. We told them they will be locked in," said County Managing Director Wil Okabe. "It's more serious now. They're putting their lives at risk."

He said he hopes people heed evacuation warnings.

County officials have been encouraging residents in other parts of the district to prepare for potential evacuations.

Edwin Montoya, who lives with his daughter on her farm near the site where lava crossed the road and cut off access, said he was at the property earlier in the day to get valuables.



Evacuee Michael Hauanao, 32, watches a clip on a phone showing volcano activities at a makeshift donation center as clouds turn red from lava flow in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoa, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

"I think I'm lucky because we went there this morning and we got all the batteries out, and all the solar panels out, about \$4,000 worth of equipment," he said. "They have to evacuate the people that are trapped up there right now in the same place that we were taking pictures this morning."

He said no one was on his property, but his neighbor had someone on his land.

"I know that the farm right next to my farm . he's got somebody there taking care of the premises, I know he's trapped," Montoya said.

Montoya said the fissure that poured lava across the road opened and grew quickly.



A young boy photographs the sky turned red from lava flows in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoehoe, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

"It was just a little crack in the ground, with a little lava coming out," he said. "Now it's a big crater that opened up where the small little crack in the ground was."

Experts are uncertain about when the volcano will calm down.

The Big Island volcano released a small explosion at its summit just before midnight Saturday, sending an ash cloud 10,000 feet (3,048 meters) into the sky. The U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said eruptions that create even minor amounts of ashfall could occur at any time.

This follows the more explosive eruption Thursday, which emitted ash and rocks thousands of feet into the sky. No one was injured and there were no reports of damaged property.



Lava erupts in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoehoe, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

Scientists said the eruption was the most powerful in recent days, though it probably lasted only a few minutes.

It came two weeks after the volcano began sending lava flows into neighborhoods 25 miles (40 kilometers) to the east of the summit.

A new lava vent—the 22nd such fissure—was reported Friday by county civil defense officials.

Several open fissure vents are still producing lava splatter and flow in evacuated areas. Gas is also pouring from the vents, cloaking homes and trees in smoke.



Lava shoot out of a fissure on Pohoiki Rd, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoa, Hawaii. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

The fresher, hotter magma will allow faster lava flows that can potentially cover more area, said Janet Babb, a geologist with the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory.

Much of the lava that has emerged so far may have been underground for decades, perhaps since a 1955 eruption.

Meanwhile, more explosive eruptions from the summit are possible.

"We have no way of knowing whether this is really the beginning or toward the end of this eruption," said Tom Shea, a volcanologist at the University of Hawaii. "We're kind of all right now in this world of uncertainty."



Lava crosses the road near Pohoiki Rd, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoia,

Hawaii. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

It's nearly impossible to determine when a volcano will stop erupting, "because the processes driving that fall below the surface and we can't see them." said volcanologist Janine Krippner of Concord University in West Virginia.

U.S. government scientists, however, are trying to pin down those signals "so we have a little better warning," said Wendy Stovall, a volcanologist with the observatory.

Thus far, Krippner noted, authorities have been able to forecast volcanic activity early enough to usher people to safety.

The greatest ongoing hazard stems from the [lava flows](#) and the hot, toxic gases spewing from open fissure vents close to homes and critical infrastructure, said Charles Mandeville of the U.S. Geological Survey's volcano hazards program.



Lava crosses the road near Pohoiki Road, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoa, Hawaii. Several open fissure vents are still producing lava splatter and flow in evacuated areas. Gas is also pouring from the vents, cloaking homes and trees in smoke. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

Authorities have been measuring gases, including sulfur dioxide, rising in little puffs from open vents.

The area affected by lava and ash is small compared to the Big Island, which is about 4,000 square miles. Most of the island and the rest of the Hawaiian chain is unaffected by the volcanic activity on Kilauea.

State and local officials have been reminding tourists that flights in and out of the entire state, including the Big Island, have not been impacted.

Even on the Big Island, most tourist activities are still available and businesses are open.



Peter Vance, 24, photographs lava erupting in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoa, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)



Volcanic activity from the Malama Ki and Leilani Estates neighborhoods glows in the distance seen from Highway 137 near Paho, Hawaii on Thursday, May 17, 2018. The greatest ongoing hazard is the ongoing lava flows and hot, toxic gases spewing from open fissure vents close to homes and critical infrastructure, said Charles Mandeville of the U.S. Geological Survey's volcano hazards program. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)



Edwin Montoya, left, and Abe Pedro, load a solar panel removed from the Montoya family's property onto a truck, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoia, Hawaii. Montoya family owns a farm near Pohoiki Road and lava crossed the road near his property, Friday, blocking off access. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)



Edwin Montoya, left, watches Mike Guich, center, and Abe Pedro, load a solar panel removed from the Montoya family's property, onto a truck, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoia, Hawaii. The Montoya family owns a farm near Pohoiki Road and lava crossed the road near his property, Friday, blocking off access. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)



Abe Pedro watches lava shoot out of a fissure on Pohoiki Rd, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoa, Hawaii. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)



Edwin Montoya films as the lava shoots out of a fissure on Pohoiki Rd, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoia, Hawaii. Montoya's daughter has a farm about a mile away from the lava fissures. The family fears the lava will destroy their farm. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia)



U.S. Air National Guardsmen stand near cracks on the road in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoehoe, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)



U.S. Air National Guardsman John Linzmeier looks at cracks as toxic gases rise near by in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoehoe, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)



Toxic gases rise near an abandoned home in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoa, Hawaii Friday, May 18, 2018. Hawaii residents covered their faces with masks after a volcano menacing the Big Island for weeks exploded, sending a mixture of pulverized rock, glass and crystal into the air in its strongest eruption of sandlike ash in days. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

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