

Rural Hawaii communities face various volcano threats

May 20 2018, by Caleb Jones And Jennifer Sinco Kelleher



A resident photographs toxic gases emitting from cracks in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoa, Hawaii Saturday, May 19, 2018. Two fissures that opened up in a rural Hawaii community have merged to produce faster and more fluid lava. Scientists say the characteristics of lava oozing from fissures in the ground has changed significantly as new magma mixes with decades-old stored lava.(AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

In the weeks since Hawaii's Kilauea volcano began erupting, dozens of

homes have burned from oozing lava, people have fled their homes and plumes of steam from the summit have shot skyward, prompting officials to distribute face masks to protect against ash particles.

Lava flows have grown more vigorous in recent days and there's concern more homes may burn and more evacuations may be ordered. Still, scientists can't say whether lava flows from nearly two dozen fissures will continue to advance, or stop.

"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."

In addition to ash fallout from explosions and the threat of lava crossing main highways, officials warned of another hazard Saturday as a flow advanced southeast to the ocean: Laze.

"Laze is when hot lava hits the ocean sending hydrochloric acid and steam with fine glass particles in the air," the Hawaii County Civil Defense agency said in an update to the public.

The area affected by lava and ash is small compared to the Big Island, which is about 4,000 square miles (10,360 square kilometers). Most of the island and the rest of the Hawaiian chain is unaffected by the volcanic activity on Kilauea.



Flowers are placed on the road as an attribute to the Hawaiian volcano goddess Pele in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoehoe, Hawaii Saturday, May 19, 2018. Two fissures that opened up in a rural Hawaii community have merged to produce faster and more fluid lava. Scientists say the characteristics of lava oozing from fissures in the ground has changed significantly as new magma mixes with decades-old stored lava.(AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

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.

Evacuation orders for two neighborhoods with nearly 2,000 people were given after a first fissure opened on May 3. Officials have been warning neighboring communities to be prepared to evacuate.

A handful of people were trapped when a flow crossed a road Friday.

Some had to be airlifted to safety.

"They shouldn't be in that area," said County Managing Director Wil Okabe.



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 flows have become faster as fresher magma mixed with decades-old magma.

The change is attributed to new magma mixing with 1955-era magma in the ground, creating hotter and more fluid flows, scientists said.

By Saturday morning, two of 22 fissures had merged, creating a wide flow advancing at rates of up to 300 yards (274 meters) per hour. Aerial footage from the USGS showed fast-moving lava advancing to the southeast. The [flow](#) was 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from the ocean, scientists said.

In the background, the footage showed lava fountaining 328 feet (100 meters) high at one of the fissures. The fountains are created by vents closing, forcing magma to burst through a single outpost, Stovall said.



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

Civil Defense Administrator Talmadge Magno said a man suffered a "serious" leg injury Saturday when he was hit with a lava spatter while

sitting on his porch near the Lanipuna Garden subdivision, the Star-Advertiser reported.

Edwin Montoya, who lives with his daughter on her farm near the site where lava crossed the road and cut off access, said the fissure opened and grew quickly.

"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."

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



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)

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.

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



Lava erupts 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 shoot out of a fissure on Pohoiki Rd, Friday, May 18, 2018, near Pahoehoe, 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)



Lava crosses the road near 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)



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)



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, 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)



U.S. Air National Guardsmen stand near cracks on the road 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)



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)

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