

New volcanic lava fissure in Hawaii prompts more evacuations

May 14 2018, by Caleb Jones



In this May 13, 2018 photo released by the U.S. Geological Survey, gases rise from a fissure near Pahoa, Hawaii. The new fissure in Hawaii's Puna District sent gases and lava exploding into the air, spurring officials to call for more evacuations as residents waited for a possible major eruption at Kilauea volcano's summit. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)

A new volcanic fissure on Hawaii's Big Island sent gases and lava

exploding into the air, prompting officials to issue calls for more evacuations as residents awaited a possible major eruption at Kilauea volcano's summit.

Hawaii County Civil Defense issued an emergency cellphone alert after the fissure was discovered early Sunday morning. The agency said one "unidentified structure" was destroyed by the new vent, bringing the total number of homes and other buildings lost to lava to nearly 40.

Residents living near the fissure were told to evacuate, and two nearby community centers were serving as shelters for people and pets.

Lava spread across hundreds of yards (meters) of private land and loud explosions rocked the neighborhood not far from the Leilani Estates subdivision, where more than a dozen other active vents opened over the past week.

Nearby resident Richard Schott, 34, watched from a police checkpoint as the eruption churned just over a ridgeline and behind some trees.

"I've actually seen rocks fly over the tree line and I can feel it in my body," Schott said. "It's like a nuclear reaction or something."

The new opening still showed signs of activity Sunday afternoon and was about 1,000 feet (300 meters) long, officials said.



In this May 13, 2018 photo released by the U.S. Geological Survey, gases rise from a fissure near Pahoehoe, Hawaii. The new fissure in Hawaii's Puna District sent gases and lava exploding into the air, spurring officials to call for more evacuations as residents waited for a possible major eruption at Kilauea volcano's summit. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)

Few fissures, ground deformation and abundant volcanic gases indicate eruptions on the eastern flank of Kilauea are likely to continue, the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said.

"The appearance of the fissures in the past couple of days does not change the overall picture or concern," USGS scientist Steve Brantley said.

Christian and Maritza Ricks, who moved to the area from California in April, stopped at the side of the road to watch and listen to the latest eruption.

"I guess it's just part of living on the island," Ricks said.

He said he wasn't really afraid of the destruction happening around him.



Gases rise from lava fissure 17 after it erupted early Sunday, May 13 2018 near Pahoehoe, Hawaii. The new fissure emitting steam and lava spatter spurred Hawaii officials to call for more evacuations on Sunday as residents braced for an expected eruption from the Kilauea volcano. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)

"In a way it's kind of exciting to see what's going on and be this close to it," Christian Ricks said.

Most of the lava outbreaks have occurred in and around Leilani Estates, where molten rock has burst through the ground, destroying more than two dozen homes and resulting in evacuation orders for nearly 2,000 people.

The U.S. Geological Survey has reported nearly 20 active fissures. One that opened Saturday night was spattering, but no flow had formed.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory reported the fissures opened just east of the Puna Geothermal Venture energy conversion plant, where steam and hot liquid are brought up through underground wells and the steam feeds a turbine generator to produce electricity.

Plant workers last week as a precaution removed 50,000 gallons (189,265 liters) of a flammable liquid stored at the site.

Geologists have warned that Kilauea's summit could have an explosive steam eruption that would hurl boulders and ash miles into the sky.



This Sunday, May 13, 2018, image released by the U.S. Geological Survey,

shows the Kīlauea Caldera at 9:30 a.m. HST, taken with a research camera mounted in the observation tower at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory in the Big Island of Hawaii. The camera is looking SSE towards the active vent in Halema‘uma‘u, 1.9 km (1.2 miles) from the webcam. For scale, Halema‘uma‘u is approximately 1 km (0.6 mi) across and about 85 m (~280 ft) deep. A new fissure emitting steam and lava spatter spurred Hawaii officials to call for more evacuations on Sunday as residents braced for an expected eruption from the Kilauea volcano. Geologists warn that Kilauea's summit could have an explosive steam eruption that would hurl rocks and ash miles into the sky. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)



A police office blocks a road near lava fissure 17 after it erupted early Sunday, May 13 2018 near Pahoā, Hawaii. The new fissure emitting steam and lava spatter spurred Hawaii officials to call for more evacuations on Sunday as residents braced for an expected eruption from the Kilauea volcano. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



Gases rise from lava fissure 17 after it erupted early Sunday, May 13 2018 near Pahoa, Hawaii. The new fissure emitting steam and lava spatter spurred Hawaii officials to call for more evacuations on Sunday as residents braced for an expected eruption from the Kilauea volcano. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



Officials fly over lava fissure 17 after it erupted early Sunday, May 13 2018 near Pahoa, Hawaii. The new fissure emitting steam and lava spatter spurred Hawaii officials to call for more evacuations on Sunday as residents braced for an expected eruption from the Kilauea volcano. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



In this May 5, 2018, file photo, lava burns across a road in the Leilani Estates subdivision near Pahoehoe, Hawaii. The lava hisses, crackles and pops. It roars like an engine as it sloshes and bubbles. It shoots into the sky, bright orange and full of danger, or oozes along the pavement, a giant bubbling blob of black marshmallow-like fluff, crushing homes and making roads impassable. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones, File)



This May 7, 2018, file photo from the U.S. Geological Survey shows gas and steam rising from multiple fissures on Moku Street in the Leilani Estates Subdivision near Pahoia on the island of Hawaii. The lava hisses, crackles and pops. It roars like an engine as it sloshes and bubbles. It shoots into the sky, bright orange and full of danger, or oozes along the pavement, a giant bubbling blob of black marshmallow-like fluff, crushing homes and making roads impassable. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP, File)



In this May 11, 2018 file photo, Hannique Ruder, a 65-year-old resident living in the Leilani Estates subdivision, stands on the mound of hardened lava near Pahoa, Hawaii. The lava hisses, crackles and pops. It roars like an engine as it sloshes and bubbles. It shoots into the sky, bright orange and full of danger, or oozes along the pavement, a giant bubbling blob of black marshmallow-like fluff, crushing homes and making roads impassable. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File)

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