

Scientists measure thickness of Kilauea lava flows in Hawaii

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Scientists measuring the thickness of Kilauea volcano's newest lava flows have said molten rock added as much as 180 feet (55 meters) of lava to parts of the Big Island last year. New land created in the ocean reaches as high as 919 feet (280 meters.)

The U.S. Geological Survey released the data last week along with a preliminary map of the flows, the Hawaii Tribune-Herald reported .

The volcano's latest eruption began last May in a residential area called Leilani Estates in Puna. It destroyed more than 700 homes before lava flows started petering out in August.

The lava buried nearly 14 square miles (36 square kilometers) of existing land. It added about 875 acres (354 hectares) of new land to the island where [molten rock](#) flowed offshore.

Much of the new data was collected by unmanned aerial vehicles and helicopters when the lava was flowing last summer, said Janet Babb, a geologist with the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory.

Scientists had to collect some data later because some spots were too remote for drones to reach or too dangerously infested with so-called laze plumes for helicopters to fly to. Laze forms when hot lava hits the ocean, reacts with sea water and sends [hydrochloric acid](#) and steam laced with fine glass particles into the air.

The U.S. Geological Survey is still examining the entire [flow](#) field and refining measurements done over the summer, Babb said.

"We'll be studying this eruption for years," she said. "There (are) a lot of studies still going on."

Babb said scientists hope to have a final [lava](#) thickness map completed in the next year.

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