

Volcanic ash cloud closes La Palma airport; new vent emerges

September 25 2021



Two people walk as lava spews from a volcano on the Canary island of La Palma, Spain in the early hours of Saturday Sept. 25, 2021. A volcano in Spain's Canary Islands is keeping nerves on edge several days since it erupted, producing loud explosions, a huge ash cloud and cracking open a new fissure that spewed out more fiery molten rock. The prompt evacuations are credited with helping avoid casualties but scientists say the lava flows could last for weeks or months. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Roca

The airport on the Spanish island of La Palma shut down Saturday because of an ash cloud spewing out of a volcano that has been erupting for a week, and scientists said another volcanic vent opened up, exposing islanders to possible new dangers.

The intensity of the eruption that began Sept. 19 has increased in recent days, prompting the evacuation of three additional villages on the island, part of Spain's Canary Islands archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean off northwest Africa. Almost 7,000 people have been forced to abandon their homes.

The recent volcanic eruption is the first since 1971 on La Palma, which has a population of 85,000.

La Palma Airport operator Aena said the [airport](#) was "inoperative" due to the accumulation of ash. Other airports in the Canary Islands were still operating Saturday but some airlines were suspending flights, Aena said.

Emergency crews pulled back from the volcano Friday as explosions sent molten rock and ash over a wide area. The Canary Islands Volcanology Institute said another vent opened early Saturday.

Rivers of lava have been sliding down the mountainside toward the southwestern coast of the island, destroying everything in their path, including hundreds of homes. The speed of the flow has slowed down considerably, however, and the lava is now barely moving forward, with about 2 kilometers left to reach the sea, said Miguel Ángel Morcuende, head of the Canary Island Volcanic Emergency Plan.



Vehicles are covered by ashes from a volcano eruption at the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Friday, Sept. 24, 2021. A volcano on a small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the volcanic eruption and its aftermath on a Spanish island could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti



Lava spews from a volcano on the Canary island of La Palma, Spain in the early hours of Saturday Sept. 25, 2021. A volcano in Spain's Canary Islands is keeping nerves on edge several days since it erupted, producing loud explosions, a huge ash cloud and cracking open a new fissure that spewed out more fiery molten rock. The prompt evacuations are credited with helping avoid casualties but scientists say the lava flows could last for weeks or months. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Roca



Lava flows in an eruption on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021. A volcano on the small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the eruption and its aftermath could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti



Residents look from a hill as lava continues to flow from an erupted volcano, on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Friday, Sept. 24, 2021. A volcano in Spain's Canary Islands continues to produce explosions and spew out lava, five days after it erupted. Two rivers of lava continue to slide slowly down the hillside of La Palma on Friday. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti



Lava spews from a volcano on the Canary island of La Palma, Spain in the early hours of Saturday Sept. 25, 2021. A volcano in Spain's Canary Islands is keeping nerves on edge several days since it erupted, producing loud explosions, a huge ash cloud and cracking open a new fissure that spewed out more fiery molten rock. The prompt evacuations are credited with helping avoid casualties but scientists say the lava flows could last for weeks or months. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Roca



Lava from a volcano eruption flows on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021. A volcano on a small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the volcanic eruption and its aftermath on a Spanish island could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, Pool



Lava from a volcano eruption flows on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021. A volcano on a small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the volcanic eruption and its aftermath on a Spanish island could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, Pool



Lava from a volcano eruption flows on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021. A volcano on a small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the volcanic eruption and its aftermath on a Spanish island could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, Pool



Lava from a volcano eruption surrounds a house on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021. A volcano on a small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the volcanic eruption and its aftermath on a Spanish island could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, Pool



Lava from a volcano eruption engulfs houses on the island of La Palma in the Canaries, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021. A volcano on a small Spanish island in the Atlantic Ocean erupted on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people. Experts say the volcanic eruption and its aftermath on a Spanish island could last for up to 84 days. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, Pool

"I don't dare to tell you when it's going to get there, nor do I dare to make a forecast," Morcuende told reporters in a news conference.

A more immediate concern for the residents of La Palma is the huge [ash cloud](#) that is rising from the volcano and being carried by the wind to other parts of the island. In addition to being a significant danger to aviation, he said volcanic ash can cause damage to people's airways, lungs and eyes. The local government has urged residents in affected

areas to avoid going outside and only do so wearing masks and goggles.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Volcanic ash cloud closes La Palma airport; new vent emerges (2021, September 25) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-09-volcanic-ash-cloud-la-palma.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.