

Volcanic eruption in Japan forces evacuations in 2 towns

July 24 2022, by MARI YAMAGUCHI



This long exposure image shows the eruption of volcano Sakurajima Sunday night, July 24, 2022, in the view from Tarumizu city, Japan's southern prefecture of Kagoshima. Japan's Meteorological Agency said a volcano on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu erupted Sunday night, spewing ash and volcanic rocks, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries in nearby towns. Credit: Kyodo News via AP

Dozens of people have evacuated two towns on Japan's main southern island of Kyushu where a volcano spewed ash and large rocks into the nighttime sky.

Large rocks fell as far as 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) from the Sakurajima volcano Sunday night in the southern prefecture of Kagoshima. Footage on Japan's NHK public television showed orange flames flashing near the crater and dark smoke with ash billowing high above the mountaintop.

Japan's Meteorological Agency raised the eruption alert to the highest level of five and advised 51 residents in two towns facing the volcano to leave their homes.

By Monday morning, 33 of them left their homes for a nursing care facility in a safer part of the region, according to Kagoshima city. NHK said others subject to evacuation might have evacuated to other locations.

"We will put the people's lives first and do our utmost to assess the situation and respond to any emergency," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki told reporters. He called on residents to pay close attention to updates from local authorities to protect their lives.

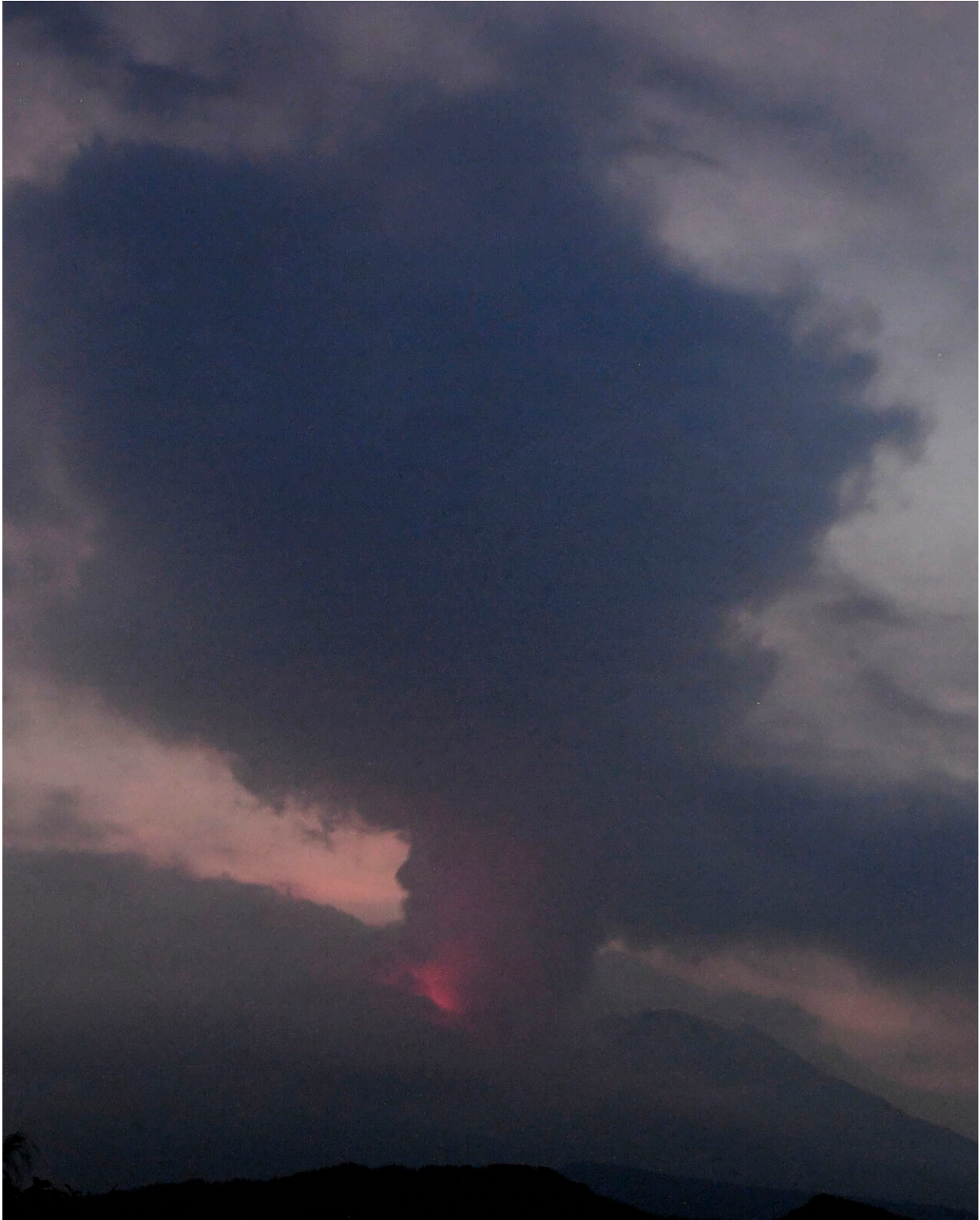
A dusting of ash was visible on cars in Kagoshima, but no damage or injuries have been reported. Schools in the area are on summer recess but closed Monday for clubs and extracurricular activities.



Sakurajima volcano is seen from a shelter at a town in Kagoshima, southern island of Kyushu, Japan, one day after its eruption, Monday, July 25, 2022. The volcano spewed ash and large rocks into the nighttime sky on Sunday. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



Ash from Sakurajima volcano is seen on a vehicle in Kagoshima, southern island of Kyushu, Japan Monday, July 25, 2022. The volcano erupted Sunday night, spewing ash and rocks, causing dozens of residents in nearby towns to evacuate to a safer part of the region. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



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Credit: Kyodo News via AP



Sakurajima volcano is seen in Kagoshima, southern island of Kyushu, Japan, one day after its eruption, Monday, July 25, 2022. The volcano spewed ash and large rocks into the nighttime sky on Sunday. Credit: Kyodo News via AP



Volcano Sakurajima is seen on March 8, 2022, in Japan's southern prefecture of Kagoshima. Japan's Meteorological Agency said a volcano on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu erupted Sunday night, July 24, 2022, spewing ash and volcanic rocks, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries in nearby towns. Credit: Kyodo News via AP

JMA warned of the potential for falling volcanic rocks within 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) of the crater and possible flow of lava, ash and searing gas within 2 kilometers (1.2 miles).

The chances of more explosive violent eruptions were low, but residents still should be watchful for falling rocks, mudslide and pyroclastic flow, said Tsuyoshi Nakatsuji, a JMA official in charge of volcano watch. He also advised residents to close curtains and stay away from windows, which could break by the force of an eruption.

Sakurajima on the main southern island of Kyushu is one of Japan's most active volcanos and has erupted repeatedly. It used to be an island but became a peninsula following an eruption in 1914 that killed 58 people.

Sakurajima is about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

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