

Hundreds of quakes in Iceland spur volcano warning

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Iceland's Fagradalsfjall volcano last erupted in 2022.

Some 2,200 earthquakes have been recorded in the area around Iceland's capital Reykjavik the past 24 hours, signaling that a volcanic eruption could be imminent, the country's weather office said Wednesday.

The Icelandic Meteorological Office (IMO) said the tremors began around 4 pm (1600 GMT) on Tuesday beneath Mount Fagradalsfjall,

which sits atop a volcanic system and where two eruptions have occurred in the past two years on the Reykjanes Peninsula, Iceland's southwestern tip.

"Around 2,200 earthquakes have been detected and the largest earthquakes have been felt in the Southwest part of Iceland," the agency said Wednesday, adding that continued seismic activity was likely.

Seven of the quakes had a magnitude over four, which is still considered a light quake.

The seismic activity also prompted the agency to raise its aviation alert to "orange" from "green".

The color code is designed to inform the aviation industry of eruption risks.

In April 2010, some 100,000 flights were canceled, leaving more than 10 million travelers stranded, following the massive eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, around 150 kilometers to the east along Iceland's southern coast.

The enormous plumes of ash that billowed into the sky for several weeks, caused the biggest air traffic disruption in peacetime until the COVID-19 pandemic.

While no "eruption tremor" had been observed so far Mount Fagradalsfjall, the likelihood of one occurring "within the coming hours to days" had increased.

Iceland is Europe's biggest and most active volcanic region.

The North Atlantic island straddles the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a crack on

the ocean floor separating the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates.

Lava spewed out near Mount Fagradalsfjall, 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the capital Reykjavik, in both 2021 and 2022, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors to catch a rare glimpse of an active volcano.

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