



## ISLAND OF HAWAII VOLCANO UPDATE

May 23, 2018, 12:00 p.m. HST

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*"One thing that impressed me - last night there was a community meeting in Pāhoa and I was there, you can still go grocery shopping. Eerie glow in the sky from the lava fountains, and the event is a generational event, it's something that is impacting the local community heavily. I would not hesitate to come to Hawai'i. If you're coming to enjoy the beaches or eat the delicious food, know it's happening in a small, eastern edge of the island."*

**Laze is being misconstrued. It's the same plume that happened in the Puuoo event, and little attention was paid to it at that time. It impacts the area just in the immediate area of the plume, very localized. It's not going to travel around the island, float to other areas. Not a reason for people to cancel their trips."**

**Wendy Stovall, Ph.D.  
Deputy Scientist-in-Charge  
Yellowstone Volcano Observatory, Volcano Hazards Program**

USGS | National Park Service | Civil Defense News Media Brief  
Wednesday, May 23, 2018, 11:00 a.m. HST

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- **Hawai'i is Open for Business:** There is absolutely no reason for visitors planning a trip to the island of Hawai'i, or the rest of the state, to change or alter their leisure or business travel plans.
  - **Air Access:** All flights into the Hawai'i Island are operating normally.
  - **Accommodations and Activities:** All accommodations, activities and attractions throughout Hawai'i Island are operating normally, with the exception of those in the area affected by the volcanic activity in the Puna District.
  - **Remote Location on the Island of Hawai'i's East Side:** None of the Hawaiian Islands are affected by Kīlauea volcano except a remote area along the Lower East Rift Zone on the island of Hawai'i's east side, Kīlauea Summit and surrounding areas.
  - **Kīlauea Summit Activity:** Steam and ash outbursts from Halema'uma'u crater are occurring in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (approximately 40 miles away from the Lower East Rift Zone) and being monitored. This is a natural occurrence as rocks fall into the crater and magma interacts with the groundwater (water table).
  - **Air Quality:** Kīlauea volcano has been erupting for the past 35 years (since January 1983). Lava has reached the ocean on several occasions.
    - Vog: Also known as volcanic smog reaches different areas of the island depending on wind direction.

- SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulfur dioxide occurs in concentration near active lava flows. Scientists working near the vents must wear gas masks to protect themselves from the concentrated fumes.
- Ash: Generated by steam-induced eruptions as magma drops and interacts with the water table.
- Laze: A byproduct of lava-ocean interaction and forms as hot lava boils seawater to dryness. This interaction results in a localized white plume of condensed seawater steam, hydrochloric acid gas, and tiny particles of glass at the coastal entry site(s).
- Officials are continuing to monitor air quality.

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## LATEST UPDATE

### KĪLAUEA SUMMIT ACTIVITY

Steam-induced explosions are occurring from Halema'uma'u Crater within Kīlauea Caldera at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. This is a natural occurrence as rocks fall into the crater and magma interacts with the groundwater (water table), which results in ash clouds that generally drift and dissipate over the southwest part of the island of Hawai'i and out to sea away from land.

Health tips regarding ash clouds:

- Avoid excessive exposure to falling ash, which can be an eye and respiratory irritant.
- Those with breathing issues should take extra precaution to minimize exposure.
- Stay indoors and keep your windows closed.
- If in a car, keep the windows closed and drive with caution.

For a guide on volcanic ash, visit <https://bit.ly/2ljlgBV>.

### KĪLAUEA LOWER EAST RIFT ZONE

Hawaiian Volcano Observatory (HVO) field crews continue to monitor and report moderate-level lava eruption activity in the Lower East Rift Zone (lower Puna area). Over the weekend (May 20), the lava, flowing downhill, reached the ocean, generating "laze." Laze, short for lava haze, is a byproduct of lava-ocean interaction and forms as hot lava boils seawater to dryness. The result is a **localized** white plume of condensed seawater steam, hydrochloric acid gas, and tiny particles of glass at the coastal entry site(s).

### MESSAGE FROM HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

As of May 23, the Kahuku Unit of the Park, located about an hour's drive south of the park's main entrance, is now open to visitors five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is free.

Additionally, National Park Rangers are available at the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center in Downtown Hilo (Tuesday through Saturday) to present educational programs and provide updates.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park emergency managers are urging motorists to slow down and use caution on Highway 11, particularly between mile markers 28 and 29, and Pi'i Mauna Road, due to cracks in the road and uneven surfaces resulting from an earthquake that occurred on May 16. In addition, motorists are reminded that stopping for non-emergency purposes along the side and shoulders of Highway 11 in Park territory to view the plumes is prohibited.

For Park updates, visit <https://www.nps.gov/havo/planyourvisit/lava2.htm>.

### HAWAII COUNTY CIVIL DEFENSE ERUPTION MAP

To view the interactive map (please wait for the page to load), visit: <https://goo.gl/i7RbrB>

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

### **AIRPORTS, ACCOMMODATIONS & ACTIVITIES**

- All airports on the island of Hawai'i continue to operate normally.
- All accommodations, activities and attractions on the island are also operating normally, with the exception of those in the area affected by the volcanic activity.
- Norwegian Cruise Lines' Pride of America will make its call into Kona next Wednesday, May 30. However, the ship will skip its call into Hilo on Tuesday, May 29.
- Visitors who have already booked a trip to the island of Hawai'i with accommodations or activities in/near the Puna district, should call their provider with any questions or concerns.
- Effective May 12, those who have vacation rental reservations in the Lower Puna restricted area should find alternative accommodations, until further notice.

### **EAST RIFT ZONE ERUPTION LOCATION**

- The volcanic activity and where lava has flowed along the East Rift Zone in/near Leilani Estates and Lanipuna Gardens Subdivisions is limited to an isolated area in Lower Puna on the island's east side. This area in the Puna district covers only less than a 10-square-mile area of the island's 4,028 square miles. The district of Puna is approximately 500 square miles, or the size of half of Rhode Island.
- This is more than 100 driving miles away from the western Kohala and Kona Coasts, where the island's major visitor accommodations and resorts are located, and the area furthest from the current activity.
- In addition, Hilo town is approximately 20 miles away, and accommodations and activities are unaffected by Kīlauea volcano.
- Kīlauea is one of the most active volcanoes on Earth, and has been erupting for the past 35 years.
- The topography of the island between east and west is un conducive for a natural flow.

### **VACATION RENTALS IN LOWER PUNA AREA**

- Effective May 12, the County of Hawai'i Civil Defense Agency has directed all vacation rental owners and operators in Lower Puna to cease operations so that emergency operations can focus on residents who live in the area.
- The Lower Puna restricted area encompasses the area accessed by Highway 132 from Leilani Estates to Kapoho, Highway 137 from Kapoho to Kalapana, and Highway 130 from Pāhoa to Pohoiki, including Pāhoa's Black Sands Beach Subdivision.
- Current vacation renters in this restricted area should find alternative accommodations outside the restricted area as soon as possible.
- Until further notice, visitors who have vacation rental reservations in the restricted area should find alternative accommodations.
- This directive has been issued to owners and operators of vacation rentals within the restricted area, online advertisers of vacation rentals, current vacation renters in the area, and vacation renters with reservations.

### **AIR QUALITY**

Air quality on the island of Hawai'i remains largely unchanged with the exception of where the volcanic activity is happening can have hazardous levels of SO<sub>2</sub> (sulfur dioxide). Officials constantly monitor SO<sub>2</sub> levels across the island. VOG or volcanic haze is relatively common on an island with active volcanoes (consider Kīlauea has been erupting since 1983) and the level of haze is dependent on volcanic activity and wind direction/strength. For forecast information, visit <http://mkwc.ifa.hawaii.edu/vmap/hysplit/>. To view SO<sub>2</sub> conditions in real-time across the state, visit <http://www.hiso2index.info/>. For statewide Air Quality, visit Air Now at <https://bit.ly/2I33ixd> (data and forecasts courtesy of the Hawai'i Department of Health – Environmental Health).

## REPORTS ABOUT ACID RAIN

- News reports about acid rain during the Kīlauea eruption have mischaracterized the severity of its potential effect on human health. In fact, acid rain is a common occurrence anytime there is rainfall on an area where volcanic haze, or VOG, is in the atmosphere, whether on the island of Hawai'i or anywhere else in the world.
- According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "Walking in acid rain, or even swimming in a lake affected by acid rain, is no more dangerous to humans than walking in normal rain or swimming in non-acidic lakes."
- Visit the State Department of Health's Hawai'i Interagency Vog Information Dashboard for the latest information at [www.ivhnhn.org/vog/](http://www.ivhnhn.org/vog/).

## HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

Most of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is closed until further notice. The Park's Kahuku Unit, which includes a 9-mile scenic drive, cinder cone, and several options, is open extended days, Wednesday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission is free. For Park updates, visit <https://www.nps.gov/havo/planyourvisit/lava2.htm>. For Volcano Watch updates, visit <https://on.doi.gov/2r8G4zE>.

## ACCESSIBILITY IN THE PUNA AREA

- Road closures are taking place on select areas of Highway 130, 132 and 137.
- No access is allowed at this time for residents of Lanipuna Gardens.
- Residents and visitors who do not have official business in Leilani Estates and Lanipuna Gardens are asked to stay away from the area.
- As a precaution, residents of Lower Puna between Kapoho and Kalapana are advised to be on alert in the event of possible volcanic activity in the area.
- Temporary flight restrictions are in place for most of Lower Puna. Drones will be confiscated in this area.
- Those who have rented accommodations or made tour reservations in the general area should check with those respective companies for the latest updates.
- Unless otherwise noted, area businesses are open and accessible. Motorists are advised to drive with caution and be prepared for increased traffic.
- Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of State Parks has closed Lava Tree State Monument and Mackenzie State Recreation Area until further notice.
- All beach parks in Lower Puna have been closed, including the Pohoiki Boat Ramp.
- The County of Hawai'i has closed the Kalapana Viewing Area until further notice.

## VOLCANOES IN HAWAII

Eruptions of Hawaiian volcanoes are typically nonexplosive or weakly explosive. Hawaiian eruptions, which is a term used by volcanologists worldwide to characterize similar eruptive style at other volcanoes, are usually gentle due to its highly fluid lava composition which tends to flow freely both beneath the surface and upon eruption. For more information about Hawaiian eruptions, visit <https://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/hawaii/page26.html>.

Travelers planning a trip to the island of Hawai'i who have questions can contact the Hawai'i Tourism United States Call Center at 1-800-GO-HAWAII (1-800-464-2924). For other updates, visit <http://hawaii tourism authority.org/news/special-alert/>.

## HELPFUL LINKS

### **Hawai'i County Civil Defense**

<http://www.hawaiicounty.gov/active-alerts>

### **Hawai'i County Eruption Map**

<https://goo.gl/i7RbrB>

### **Hawaiian Volcano Observatory / USGS**

<https://on.doi.gov/2FEPVBm>

*Volcano Watch updates:* <https://on.doi.gov/2r8G4zE>

### **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park**

<https://www.nps.gov/havo/planyourvisit/lava2.htm>

### **Volcanic Ash Guide**

<https://bit.ly/2ljlqBV>

### **SO2 Measurement Map – Department of Health**

<http://www.hiso2index.info>

### **General Air Quality / Air Now**

<https://bit.ly/2l33ixd>

### **State of Hawai'i Interagency Vog Information Dashboard**

<http://www.ivhnhn.org/vog/>

### **Hawaiian Eruptions**

<https://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/hawaii/page26.html>

### **Na Leo TV (video media briefs)**

<http://naleo.tv/vod/>

## TOURISM UPDATES

### **Hawai'i Tourism Authority Special Alerts**

<http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/news/special-alert/>

## TRAVELERS MAY CALL

Travelers planning a trip to the island of Hawai'i who have questions can contact the Hawai'i Tourism United States Call Center at 1-800-GO-HAWAII (1-800-464-2924).