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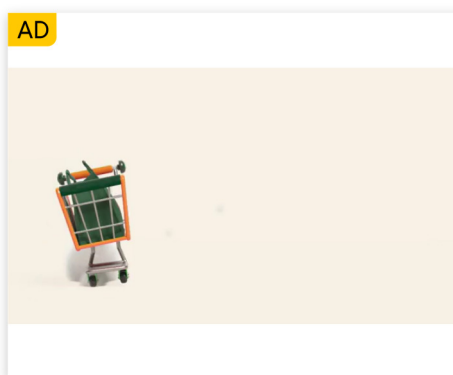
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# Hawaii's Big Island gets warning as huge volcano rumbles

By AUDREY McAVOY   October 27, 2022



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Big Island that the world's largest active volcano, Mauna Loa, is sending signals that it may erupt.

Scientists say an eruption isn't imminent, but they are on alert because of a recent spike in earthquakes at the volcano's summit. Experts say it would take just a few hours for lava to reach homes closest to vents on the volcano, which last erupted in 1984.

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Hawaii's civil defense agency is holding meetings across



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They recommend having a "go" bag with food, identifying a place to stay once they leave home and making a plan for reuniting with family members.

"Not to panic everybody, but they have to be aware of that you live on the slopes of Mauna Loa. There's a potential for some kind of lava disaster," said Talmadge Magno, the administrator for Hawaii County Civil Defense.

The volcano makes up 51% of the Hawaii Island landmass, so a large portion of the island has the potential to be affected by an eruption, Magno said.

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population has more than doubled to 200,000 today from 92,000 in 1980 — and many newer residents weren't around when Mauna Loa last erupted 38 years ago. All the more reason why Magno said officials are spreading the word about the science of the volcano and urging people to be prepared.

Mauna Loa, rising 13,679 feet (4,169 meters) above sea level, is the much larger neighbor to Kilauea volcano, which erupted in a residential neighborhood and destroyed 700 homes in 2018. Some of its slopes are much steeper than Kilauea's so when it erupts, its lava can flow much

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(24 kilometers)  
to the ocean in  
less than three  
hours.

The Hawaiian  
Volcano  
Observatory,  
which is part of  
the U.S.  
Geological  
Survey, said  
Mauna Loa has  
been in a state  
of “heightened  
unrest” since  
the middle of  
last month  
when the  
number of  
summit  
earthquakes  
jumped from 10  
to 20 per day to  
40 to 50 per day.

Scientists  
believe more  
earthquakes are  
occurring  
because more  
magma is  
flowing into  
Mauna Loa’s  
summit  
reservoir system  
from the hot  
spot under the  
earth’s surface  
that feeds  
molten rock to  
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could rise again.

## War...

**Officials**

More than 220 people attended a community meeting last weekend that county civil defense officials held in Ocean View, a neighborhood that lava could reach in hours if molten rock erupts through vents on Mauna Loa's southwest flank.

Bob Werner, an Ocean View resident who didn't attend the meeting, said it's wise to be aware of a possible eruption but not to fear it. He's not concerned that the neighborhood would be completely cut off, if lava flows across the only road connecting it to the bigger towns of Kailua-

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concern is it will be extremely annoying to drive an extra hour or two hours to get the same stuff," he said.

Ryan Williams, the owner of the Margarita Village bar in Hilo, said the volcanic unrest wasn't worrying customers who are used to warnings.

There could still be a heightened sense of urgency since officials have been holding town hall meetings, urging people to prepare.

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"But everything I've read or heard, they trying to kind of assure people that conditions have not



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just to be alert.

Magno said his agency is talking to residents now because communities closest to vents likely wouldn't have enough time to learn how to respond and prepare once the observatory raises its alert level to "watch," which means an eruption is imminent.

The current alert level is "advisory" meaning the volcano is showing signs of unrest yet there's no indication an eruption is likely or certain.

Residents in other parts of the island would have more time to react.

Lava from Mauna Loa's northeast flank could take days or weeks to

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THE MOUNTAIN'S

side are  
relatively gentle  
and because  
towns are  
farther from  
volcanic vents.

Frank Trusdell,  
research  
geologist at the  
Hawaiian  
Volcano  
Observatory,  
said all of  
Mauna Loa's  
eruptions in  
recorded history  
have started in  
its summit  
crater. About  
half of them  
stayed there,  
while the other  
half later  
spewed lava  
from vents  
lower down the  
mountain.

Lava erupting  
from the  
summit  
generally  
doesn't travel  
far enough to  
reach  
residential  
areas.

Mauna Loa has  
erupted 33 times  
since 1843. It  
last erupted in

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kilometers)  
short of Hilo,  
the Big Island's  
most populous  
town.

Mauna Loa also  
has a history of  
disgorging huge  
volumes of lava.

In the 1950  
eruption, which  
lasted for 23  
days, Mauna  
Loa released  
1,000 cubic  
meters (1,307  
cubic yards) of  
lava per second.  
In contrast,  
Kilauea released  
300 cubic  
meters (392  
cubic yards) per  
second in 2018.

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The earthquakes  
could continue  
for a while  
before any  
eruption:  
increased  
seismic activity  
lasted for a year  
before a 1975  
eruption and a  
year-and-a-half

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and Mauna Loa  
may not erupt  
this time.

Trusdell said  
residents should  
look at his  
agency's maps  
and learn how  
quickly lava may  
show up in their  
neighborhood.  
He also urged  
people living in  
one of the  
short-notice  
areas to pay  
attention if the  
summit turns  
red.

"All you got to  
do is look up  
there and see  
the glow. You  
grab your stuff,  
throw it in the  
car and drive.  
Go!" he said.

They can always  
go home after if  
the lava  
ultimately  
doesn't flow  
into their  
neighborhood,  
he said.

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Associated  
Press Writer  
Mark Thiessen