

- Natural disaster (volcanic eruption / earthquake)

Thousands flee after Hawaii quake triggers volcano eruptions

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LEILANI ESTATES (AFP) — Thousands of people have been forced to flee after a magnitude 6.9 earthquake shook Hawaii's Big Island, triggering the collapse of a coastal cliff and prompting fresh eruptions of a volcano that has been spewing lava near residential areas.



No injuries have been reported but several homes were destroyed or badly damaged by the quake on Friday, the biggest to hit the island since 1975, authorities said. It caused small sea-level changes but no tsunamis.

The US Geological Survey said the quake struck at 12:32 p.m. (2232 GMT) and was centered on the south flank of the Kilauea volcano, which first erupted on Thursday after a series of tremors.

A 5.7-magnitude tremor hit the island earlier on Friday. The quakes prompted the Kilauea volcano, one of five active on the island, to erupt.

The quakes temporarily cut power to thousands of households.

The Federal Aviation Administration imposed flight restrictions over the area through Monday for all but relief operations.

The quakes triggered rock slides on trails in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and caused a coastal cliff to collapse into the ocean.

Officials ordered a rare closure of the park, which covers more than a tenth of the island's total surface. About 2,600 visitors were evacuated.

“It is currently not safe to be here,” Park Superintendent Cindy Orlando said in a statement.

Video footage showed orange magma gushing up from cracks in the ground and snaking through a wooded area.

Molten lava could also be seen bubbling up through cracks on streets in the Leilani Estates and Lanipuna Gardens neighborhood, where residents were ordered to evacuate on Thursday.

The area is home to about 1,700 people and 770 structures, and some 10,000 people live in the broader district potentially impacted.

Gov. David Ige mobilized the Hawaii National Guard, which deployed about 70 soldiers and airmen to help with evacuation, neighborhood security and other emergency work.

“It seems like a lot of folks have left with the guard,” Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard said on CNN, adding that she did not anticipate the active volcano threat hurting tourism.