

- Natural disaster (volcanic eruption)

Hawaii volcano erupts; evacuations ordered

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HONOLULU (AP) — Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano erupted on Thursday, sending lava shooting into the air in a residential neighborhood and prompting mandatory evacuation orders for nearby homes.

through a forest.

Resident Jeremiah Osuna captured drone footage of the

Star-Advertiser.

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National Guard to assist with evacuations.

Nearby community centers

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Hawaii County said steam and lava poured out of a crack in Leilani Estates, which is near the town of Pahoa on the Big Island.

Footage shown on local television showed lava spurting into the sky from a crack in a road. Aerial drone footage showed a line of lava snaking through a forest.

Resident Jeremiah Osuna captured drone footage of the lava burning through the trees, a scene he described as a “curtain of fire.”

“It sounded like if you were to put a bunch of rocks into a dryer and turn it on as high as you could. You could just smell sulfur and burning trees and underbrush and stuff,” he told Honolulu television station KHON.

Lava fountains were shooting 150 feet in the air, and molten lava spread out over an area about 200 yards wide behind one house in Leilani Estates, Big Island resident Ikaika Marzo told the Honolulu Star-Advertiser. “It sounds like a jet engine. It’s going hard,” he said. County, state and federal officials had been warning residents all week that they should be prepared to evacuate, as an eruption would give little warning. Officials at the US Geological Survey on Thursday raised the volcano’s alert level to warning status, the highest possible, meaning a hazardous eruption is imminent, underway or suspected.

The county has ordered evacuations for all of Leilani Estates, which according to the 2010 US Census has a population of 1,500. The state also mobilized the Hawaii National Guard to assist with evacuations.

Nearby community centers have opened for shelter.

Ranson Yoneda, the recreation director for a Pahoia community center, was readying the gymnasium for evacuees after it was selected as a Red Cross evacuation center.

He said so far, about 15 people have arrived, some with animals, and they are hungry for information.

“They just want to know what’s going on because they were told it’s a mandatory evacuation,” he said by telephone.

The US Geological Survey said new ground cracks were reported Thursday afternoon. Hot vapor emerged from a crack and spattering lava began to erupt.