



Hawai'i Volcanoes News Release

June 17, 2007

Park Roads and Trails Remain Closed Through the Night

Seismic activity continues on the east rift of Kilauea Volcano and the closures that went into effect today will remain until further notice. Rangers are on duty throughout the night and an 8:00 am briefing is scheduled for tomorrow to reassess the volcano's seismic status.

The number of earthquakes in today's swarm now numbers over two-hundred and fifty. A swarm is a hidden hazard—an unseen hazard—and those are often the most dangerous.

On Kilauea, an earthquake swarm can herald the start of an eruption. An eruption on Kilauea typically begins with a line of lava fountains that feed flows that can cut off roads and trails, and ignite wildfires. New vents also release sulfurous gases that make breathing difficult. It can be a perilous time.

Fortunately, Kilauea Volcano is one of the most closely monitored volcanoes on earth. Scientists at the USGS Hawaiian Volcano Observatory have their finger on the pulse of the mountain. They readily share information with park managers who in turn make the tough decisions on area closures and visitor access.

Once notified about this morning's seismicity, park rangers rallied to take precautionary measures to protect lives. By 4:00 a.m., rangers were sweeping and closing Chain of Craters Road, Hilina Pali Road and most of Crater Rim Drive. They evacuated eleven campers from Kulanaokauaiki Campground and advised coastal campers at Halape and Keauhou of the earthquake activity. They relocated the park's stock animals—five horses and two mules—to a pasture out of harm's way.

For some visitors, today's closures were frustrating. However, Kilauea Visitor Center, Jaggar Museum, Volcano House Hotel, Kilauea Military Camp, and Volcano Art Center Gallery remained open, and rangers were on hand to give updates on the activity. A plus for visitors was the free park entrance and the incredibly clear and sunny weather, offering some of the best views of Kilauea's summit and Halema'uma'u Crater.

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Scientists believe as time passes an eruption from this seismic event is less likely but still possible.

“No matter the outcome, it is a reminder for everyone to stay alert and be prepared,” said Park Superintendent Cindy Orlando.

Kilauea is a young volcano with a whole lot more growing up to do. She attracts attention worldwide. And always seems to have the last word.