

Spanish volcano's crater collapses

Authorities on the Spanish island of La Palma said Monday they are tightening their surveillance of an erupting volcano, after part of the crater collapsed and unleashed a cascade of more liquid and faster-moving lava.

The crater was "like a dam," said Maria Jose Blanco, a director of the National Geographic Institute on the Canary Islands. When part of its wall collapsed, fiery molten rock poured out from a "lava lake" inside.

The more fluid lava followed the same course as previous molten rock, which has now hardened, filling up gaps and spilling over the sides into surrounding countryside.

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The river of lava is now 1,250 metres wide — 300 metres wider than on Sunday, when the crater partially crumbled.

More earthquakes also rattled the island Monday, though officials said they were deep underground and weren't expected to create new fissures.

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Two small earthquakes shook the Spanish island of La Palma on Monday and molten hot lava surged from La Cumbre Vieja volcano after a new vent opened. (Daniel Roca/The Associated Press) 1:18

The volcano on the Cumbre Vieja ridge, which erupted two weeks ago, has become more explosive after subsiding for several days last week. The Canary Islands Volcanology Institute showed images of football-sized chunks of lava, which it called "volcanic bombs," hurled hundreds of metres from the crater.

The area covered by lava has grown to more than 413 hectares and the new rocky shelf on the shore where the lava meets the Atlantic Ocean now covers around 80 acres, according to Miguel Angel Morcuende of the regional volcano emergency department.

Photos

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"It's not over yet, we don't even know how long there is to go," Canary Islands' regional president Angel Victor Torres told public broadcaster RTVE. "We're in nature's hands."

Most of La Palma, where about 85,000 people live, has been unaffected by the eruption. Swift evacuations helped avoid casualties from the eruption.

But the lava is causing significant damage to property, public infrastructure and farmland.