

# **Hawaii Kilauea eruption is KILLING tourist economy and forcing residents into DEBT**

HAWAII'S Kilauea volcano has not only destroyed thousands of homes and natural landmarks but it is now in the process of destroying the economy and tourist trade.

Eruptions and 2,000 degree lava flows have forced more than 1,000 residents to flee their homes.

Now Hawaii County faces a \$5 million (£3.7million) shortfall for the 2018 to 19 fiscal year, according to a West Hawaii Today report last week.

State Representative Joy San Buenaventura, who represents Puna, said: "Right now the tourist hub of Volcano is closed for business.

"There are at least 12 miles along the highway that once had turn-offs to Mauna Loa's koa forest and endangered birds, to trails and to picnic and campgrounds that are all closed and thus, all transient accommodations, restaurants, cafes, gift shops and other tourist venues in the small town of Volcano are dying."

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The 6,000 acres covered in lava also used to be where 500 taxpaying homes sat.

US Governor David Ige has used his emergency declaration powers to assign \$12 million (£9 million) in state dollars for the Big Island county government emergency.

But there are other less-obvious problems facing Hawaii.

Local businessman, Bill Walter, said local farms growing papaya, tropical flowers and other crops have been damaged, isolated by lava flows or ruined by toxic fumes.



GETTY - The 6,000 acres covered in lava also used to be where 500 taxpaying homes sat

This comes after many in the region took out loans after damage from a hurricane four years ago.

Mr Walter said: “The bad news is the debt. It is going to be a matter of getting the farms back into business.”

The National Park Service estimates that last year Hawaii Volcanoes National Park brought \$166 million (£125 million) in spending to the area.

It has also supported 2,020 jobs and \$78.8 million (£59.45 million) in labour income.



GETTY - Constant eruptions since May have forced the park to close

But constant eruptions since May have forced the park to close.

Experts cannot predict when the eruptions will cease, so officials do not know when the park’s major attractions can open.

The amount of lava or magma pouring into the ocean on the Big Island used to be at the Kilauea summit.

But now it has gone, it is not holding up the summit which is causing it to fall.

Mr Walter added: “The magma has gone away, the entire area is dropping, without that support, it causes big cracks throughout the park.”



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