

Papua New Guinea volcano: 'Unusual' Ring of Fire ERUPTION 'blocks the sun' amid mass panic

Papua New Guinea is on high alert after the Maman Island volcano erupted yesterday, forcing 2,000 villagers to evacuate, as concerns grow over the volatile site along the Pacific Ring of Fire.

Papua New Guinea has deployed armed forces to help emergency evacuations, after the Maman Island volcano erupted on Saturday.

The massive eruption sent a plume of ash nine miles into the sky, blocking out the sun for several hours and triggering panic among villagers.

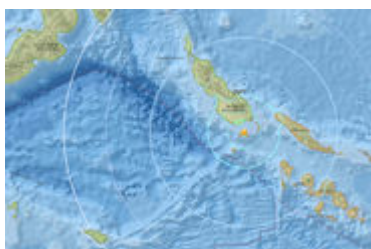
Around 2,000 villagers from three separate villages have fled so far from the flowing lava and blanket of ash.

Manam Island, just six miles wide, is one of the world's most active volcanoes and sits along the volatile Pacific Ring of Fire.

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Steve Saunders, from the Rabaul Volcano Observatory (RVO), said: “The most affected areas are Baliau and Kuluguma and due to the very poor visibility caused by the ash fall, people are using torch light to move around.”

He added that the eruption was “unusually large” and warned that a new vent had opened, indicating more activity was likely to come.

The ash has been so heavy that trees have snapped under its weight and at least two houses have collapsed.

Peter Sukua, a local leader from Baliau village, said villagers were in a state of shock.

The Darwin Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre issued a threat warning to commercial planes to reroute around the cloud.

A team from Papua New Guinea’s National Disaster Centre has been sent to Manam Island to inspect the damage from the eruption.

Madang Governor Peter Yama also confirmed that two Papua New Guinea Defence Force vessels had been sent to help conduct emergency evacuations.

The Acting Provincial Administrator, John Bivi, said: “This eruption is different. There are two craters that have erupted and lava flow has happened. This is problematic.”

Previous eruptions on Manam have killed residents who breathed in the ash or were buried by landslides.

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