



NEWS RELEASE

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Workers respond as lava, shifting ground damages poles; outages affect Lanipuna, parts of Leilani Estates

HILO, May 9, 2018 – Hawai'i Electric Light personnel are inspecting equipment in the Leilani Estates and Lanipuna subdivisions and shutting down parts of circuits that are threatened or already damaged by the lava flow.

Line crews today replaced a pole on Leilani Avenue that may have been toppled by volcanic activity that shifted the ground.

The pole blocked the road and caused an outage affecting about 500 Leilani Estates customers who still had power after the eruptions began last week. Once repairs are completed, the power is expected to be turned back on later today for those customers, although a mandatory evacuation remains in effect for the area. Residents are allowed in only during certain hours.

An additional 300 customers in the subdivision have been without electricity since the eruption began last week and in the past 24 hours as new fissures have opened, about 50 customers in the neighboring Lanipuna Gardens subdivision are without power.

A preliminary aerial inspection found that at least 50 poles are damaged. By comparison, 285 poles were damaged by Tropical Storm Iselle in 2014.

Hawai'i Electric Light continues to warn residents to assume that all downed lines and equipment are still energized and dangerous.

“As the county Civil Defense agency has warned, this event remains extremely unpredictable and no one should make assumptions about when affected areas will be safe,” said company spokesperson Rhea Lee-Moku. “As the eruption moves into new areas, there may be additional outages so residents need to be prepared. We will only make repairs when it’s safe for our crews to do the work.”

With the shutdown of the Puna Geothermal Venture (PGV) plant, Hawai'i Electric Light still has sufficient power generation available to meet the island's needs. The geothermal plant is an independent power producer that has sold electricity to Hawai'i Electric Light since 1992 and typically provides about 25 percent of the island's electricity.

Under an emergency proclamation, state officials said they are taking steps to secure the plant to ensure public safety.

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Jay Ignacio, president of Hawai'i Electric Light, said the company has been in regular contact with PGV and will follow directions from state and county Civil Defense officials related to the securing of the plant.

Check Hawai'i Electric Light's website (www.hawaiielectriclight.com), Twitter (@HIElectricLight), and Facebook (HawaiianElectric) accounts for updates.

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