Pavlov Eruption Lighting Up Night Sky

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Pavlov Volcano photographed Tuesday night by Sand Point resident Gina Stafford.

Stephanie Joyce/KUCB

Pavlof Volcano has been putting on a light show for residents of several communities on the Alaska Peninsula in recent nights. As KUCB’s Stephanie Joyce reports, activity at the volcano has increased, and it’s shooting lava high into the air and spewing ash up to 20,000 feet.

1:27

Cold Bay resident Molly Watson was watching Pavlof for signs of activity from her kitchen window most of Tuesday night.

[15Pavlof
- 1, 13s, out-cue: “what is that!?!”] “And I’d kind of given up, thinking ‘ehn, we’re not going to see anything else, just smoke.’ As soon as I mentally thought that, and I was actually writing it to a friend -- I was emailing -- and sure enough, I saw this spark, and I was like ‘what is that?!’”

Watson says at first it just looked like a faint glow on the side of the mountain, but that it got clearer over time.

[15Pavlof
- 2, 9s, out-cue: “side of the mountain”] “As it got darker you could really see it shooting up and out -- and then you could see the lava flow going down the side of the mountain.”

Pavlof was also shooting up ash clouds -- some of them rising up to 20,000 feet. Alaska Volcano Observatory scientist-in-charge John Power:

[15Pavlof - 3, 17s, out-cue: “international air travel”] “Most of the plumes that we’ve been seeing are more in the 15,000 foot range, and seem to be falling out of the atmosphere quite quickly. So, so far there hasn’t been any widespread ashfall from this, and it certainly has not gotten up high enough to affect international air travel.”

Nevertheless, an advisory has been issued for all flights in the area, and Power says the Observatory will be monitoring for ash clouds reaching 30,000 feet or above. He adds that other agencies are keeping a close eye on air quality in local communities.

[15Pavlof - 4, 12s, out-cue: “case this time”] “There is some concern for ash fallout, although in the 2007 eruption, it didn’t pose much of problem for those communities, and we’ll be hopeful that that’s the case this time.”

So long as it is, Cold Bay and Sand Point residents can rest easy, and continue to enjoy the light show.

In Unalaska, I’m SJ.