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Ancient Russian Volcano Awakens After Six Centuries, Sends Ash Miles into Sky

August 4, 2025
— Categories: Breaking News

A long-dormant volcano on Russia's remote Kamchatka Peninsula has erupted for the first time in centuries, sending a massive ash plume over 6 kilometres into the atmosphere and prompting regional tsunami warnings. The Krasheninnikov volcano, situated within the Kronotsky Nature Reserve in the country's far east, began erupting overnight on Sunday following a string of powerful earthquakes in the region.

Authorities confirmed that the eruption marked the first historically verified activity from Krasheninnikov in approximately 600 years. The event came on the heels of an 8.8-magnitude earthquake earlier in the week, which triggered tsunami waves affecting Japan and Alaska, and set off marine alerts across the Pacific basin, including Hawaii and the Americas.

According to the Kamchatka Branch of the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations, the ash plume from Krasheninnikov's eruption is currently drifting eastward towards the Pacific Ocean. Fortunately, the path of the plume does not intersect with any populated areas, and no ashfall has been reported in nearby settlements. The Ministry added that the eruption was accompanied by a 7.0-magnitude earthquake, intensifying seismic concerns across the peninsula. A temporary tsunami warning was issued for three coastal districts in Kamchatka but was lifted later the same day after no significant wave activity was observed.

Olga Girina, who heads the Kamchatka Volcanic Eruption Response Team, confirmed the historic nature of the eruption in statements to Russian state media, noting that the last recorded lava flow from Krasheninnikov occurred around the year 1463. The Smithsonian Institution's Global Volcanism Program, however, cites the last eruption as taking place in 1550, highlighting a discrepancy in the geological record.

Girina further explained via the Telegram channel of the Institute of Volcanology and Seismology that the current activity, although intense, was showing signs of decline by late Sunday. Nonetheless, moderate explosive eruptions and continued ash emissions remain possible in the coming days.

The Kamchatka Peninsula is one of the most volcanically active regions in the world and forms part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where tectonic plate boundaries cause frequent seismic and volcanic activity. The Krasheninnikov eruption, though remote, underscores the broader geophysical volatility of the area.

While the eruption has not caused immediate harm to people or infrastructure, air traffic over the region is being closely monitored due to the potential hazard posed by volcanic ash to aircraft engines. Russian aviation authorities have yet to report any flight disruptions.

Emergency services remain on alert as geologists continue to assess the situation and monitor aftershocks across the region.