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Earthquakes, Blizzards, Volcanic Activity All Hit Russia's Far East on One Day

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Severe natural upheavals raged across Russia's Far East on Thursday, as the region experienced increased volcanic activity, at least five earthquakes, avalanches and a month's worth of snow within a day, media reports said.

An airport on Sakhalin Island was forced to shut down while regional officials closed off roads and struggled to restore power to 12 villages on the south of the island that were still without electricity Thursday morning, Interfax reported.

The Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Airport was closed for the second day in a row on Thursday, with 60 flights grounded or rerouted because of the severe snow storm, Interfax reported. More than 1,000 people were stranded in the terminal, the airport said in a statement Wednesday.

The authorities have also issued an avalanche alert for Sakhalin Island and the Kamchatka Peninsula after three snow slides were recorded in one day, according to Interfax.

Nobody was injured in the relatively small snow slides, which were less than 60 cubic meters in volume, a spokesperson for the local road authority was quoted as saying.

The cyclone that brought these severe snowstorms to the region is expected to continue for the rest of the week, a spokesperson for the local weather service told Interfax.

Four earthquakes rattled the Sakhalin region in just one day, with the strongest one on Thursday morning reaching a magnitude of 5.2 at its epicenter in the Pacific Ocean, Interfax reported, citing the local seismic station.

Another 5.4-magnitude earthquake was reported in Kamchatka, according to Interfax.

In a further demonstration of the force of nature, the Shiveluch volcano in Kamchatka emitted an immense plume of volcanic ash on Wednesday, which drifted northwest over unpopulated areas, the regional branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry said in a statement, Interfax reported.

The nearly 5,000-meter-high Klyuchevsky volcano, also located in Kamchatka, on Monday began spewing ash up to 6 kilometers in the air, the ministry said.

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