

## ***MEXICO: VOLCANIC ERUPTION***

*20 December 2000*

### ***Information Bulletin N° 1***

#### ***The Disaster***

Since Monday, 11 December, the Popocatepetl volcano, 65 kilometres south east of Mexico city, has been in constant activity. The National Centre for Disaster Prevention (CENAPRED) stated that on 17 December the volcano spewed smoke and ash columns reaching a height of two kilometres. Activity has intensified over the last two days as ash, smoke and incandescent lava rock continue to shower from the volcano. The volcano currently remains on yellow alert, however, there is a strong possibility that an eruption may take place in a period of weeks or months. The Mexican authorities are also concerned that the glacier on the volcano's western face could become dislodged by molten rock and result in massive mudslides.

Government authorities have evacuated 22 communities in the zone which is most at risk in the states of Mexico, Puebla and Morelos where some 41,000 people have left their homes. 145 refuges have been set up with the support of the army. There are currently around 10,928 people from Puebla and 5,000 from Morelos who are accommodated in shelters. Figures from the state of Mexico are yet to be obtained. The Ministry of Social Welfare has ensured transportation of 150 MT of food to supply the refuges with hot meals and the Ministry of Health has confirmed that sanitary conditions are satisfactory. Evacuations which were initially carried out over a radius of 10 kilometres are currently taking place over a radius of 20 kilometres of Popocatepetl and ambulances and personnel have been deployed from the states of Michoacán and Guerrero.

#### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Mexican Red Cross is providing assistance in the following areas: medical services, psychological support, registration in the temporary shelters. In addition, the National Society and has opened centres offering support and rescue services. Volunteers are helping those who are evacuating their villages and are providing first aid services. The Mexican Red Cross is participating in search and tracing operations and is assisting in the monitoring of damage incurred.

## *Needs*

The Mexican Red Cross has sufficient capacity to respond to the emergency at the present level. The regional delegation maintains constant contact with the National Society. Further information will be provided as the situation evolves.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Head  
Relationship Management Department

Santiago Gil  
Head  
Americas Department

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