

GUATEMALA: PACAYA VOLCANO ERUPTION

18 January 2000

Information Bulletin N° 01

The Disaster

On the 16th of January, 2000, the Pacaya Volcano reactivated with an eruption spewing out lava, sand, rocks and ash. After 3 hours of intense activity the eruption subsided. Relief workers reported 168 families were evacuated to the to a shelter in the town of San Vicente Pacaya. The Relief teams were made up of the Guatemalan Red Cross, the Fire brigade, the National Police, Army and coordinated by the National Coordinator for the Reduction of Disasters. The Volcano Institute warned that the toxic gases could call respiratory and eye problems for the inhabitants of the villages located at the foot of the volcano. Due to the height of the activity and the winds other populated areas were not in danger. Activity continues and a yellow alert is in effect for possible additional eruptions.

At this time no housing or personal damage is reported, the crops of maize, beans and coffee have been affected. The majority of the local inhabitants are farmers. The Ministry of Health is closely monitoring the situation for possible health problems. The International Airport, La Aurora, was temporary closed during the night of 16 January as a precautionary measure. It has since reopened.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

On 17 January the Relief brigade of the Guatemalan Red Cross helped in the evacuation and gave assistance to the evacuees. 12 volunteers with 2 ambulances were involved. Their evaluation revealed that most of the almost 800 temporarily displaced were women, children and the elderly. They also assisted in providing clean water to the displaced. 19 persons were given medical attention and two women in labour were transferred to the hospital. All Red Cross activity was made in coordination with the mayor of San Vicente Pacaya and the local authorities.

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