

MINOR EMERGENCY



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

EL SALVADOR: VOLCANIC ERUPTION

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

CHF 149,400 (USD 114,820 OR EUR 96,262) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION.

UN earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

Given the precarious situation relating to the Ilamatepec volcano as well as torrential rains in El Salvador which are currently causing lethal landslides and affecting thousands of people, it is anticipated that an emergency appeal may be launched shortly for El Salvador.

For information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The situation

El Salvador's largest volcano, dormant for more than a century, shook the ground as it woke up Saturday, 1 October hurling out hot lava rocks, killing at least two people and forcing more than 2,000 to flee. The Ilamatepec volcano, also known as Santa Ana, located 66 kilometres (41 miles) west of the capital, began rumbling and emitting thick plumes of smoke that reached more than 15 kilometres (nine miles) into the sky just after 8:30 a.m. (1430 GMT) Saturday. Military emergency sirens blasted, calling for an immediate area evacuation of the nearby towns and soon after the volcano began hurling glowing lava and ash from its crater. The volcano began to expel magma on the side of the town of San Blas, while the ash was carried by a south-south-westerly wind. Hot lava rocks expelled by the volcano ranged from the size of a football to the size of a car.

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The volcano has been rumbling for days, and on Friday some 30 families living in the area were evacuated after columns of sulphuric smoke rose from the crater. Officials with the National Emergency Committee (COEN) said that by 1 p.m. Saturday 2,250 people had been evacuated from the danger zone. In total, some 5,000 residents have been evacuated. At least seven people were injured by red hot lava rocks spewed into the air by the eruption, the national police said. Two people were killed when 200 residents were evacuated from the town of Palo Campana, located just two kilometres from the crater. Residents fled aboard trucks when a flood of boiling water from an underground lake rushed down from the crater from three directions. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture estimates that some 7,000 km² of the country's coffee crops have been covered in ash and have likely been destroyed.

The National Emergency Committee (COEN) has declared a red alert in the area within 4,000 metres of the volcano, and a yellow alert in other nearby areas. The country's civil protection forces have been deployed and are operational.

Some 20,000 people live in the area surrounding the volcano. At 2,381 meters (7,812 feet) above sea level, the Santa Ana volcano is the highest point in El Salvador. It last erupted in 1904.

Red Cross action taken so far

To date, the Salvadorean Red Cross Society (SRC), working in coordination with other relief organizations in the field, has evacuated approximately 4,000 people to the shelters that have been set up in the area. Schools, community centres, stadiums, gymnasiums and farms are being used as emergency shelters. The towns that have been most seriously affected by the eruption are Juayua, Nahuizalco y Sonsonate, and two SRC damage and needs assessment teams have been mobilized to the area in order to determine the needs of the affected population.

In accordance with the SRC National Emergency Plan, the relief department held a meeting to draw up an intervention strategy for the relief operation, which included deployment of National Intervention Teams (NITs), damage and needs assessment teams, first aid personnel, a rescue unit, and the flood rescue specialists (TREPI). Two NITs teams have been mobilized to the area where they are assisting government authorities in evacuating residents to shelters. The National Society's emergency contingency plan has been activated and 400 volunteers from 10 branches have been mobilized. The operations centre has sent 25 vehicles to support the branches in Sonsonate, Nahuizalco, Juayua, and Santa Ana, including trucks and ambulances to transport equipment and affected persons in the region. In addition, three SRC operations centres have been opened in the municipalities of Juayua, Sonsonate and Santa Ana in order to manage the operations from the field and strengthen the local branches with additional trained personnel.



People are evacuated from the area surrounding the volcano

The National Society's telecommunications unit was mobilized to Cerro El Cachio, located between the departments of Sonsonate and Ahuachapán to repair the telecommunications equipment in the area. It is of vital importance to maintain the VHF communication network since the area has been without electricity since Saturday.

Salvadorean Red Cross Society personnel are currently continuing to work in the area, although conditions are difficult due to rains, which are threatening to cause acid rain as well as mudslides.

The needs

Through damage and needs assessments, the Salvadorean Red Cross Society has determined that the greatest needs as a result of this disaster are for food, hygiene kits, blankets and kitchen kits as many residents were forced to flee their homes, bringing with them only a few personal items. Of the families that have been relocated to the official shelters set up in the area, the Salvadorean Red Cross Society will prioritize 500 families to receive essential relief items. At-risk communities will also receive training in disaster preparedness in order to mitigate the effects of future disasters.

To address the needs of the affected population, the SRC will purchase and distribute 2,500 blankets, 500 food kits, 500 hygiene kits and 500 kitchen sets. The Salvadorean Red Cross has already distributed hygiene kits and blankets to 455 families in shelters in the affected areas. Each family received one family hygiene kits and two blankets.

Department of Santa Ana		
Municipality of El Congo		
Shelter	Persons	Families
El Congo National Institute	315	63
El Congo School	370	74
Centroamericano School	200	40
Sub Total	885	117
Municipality of Santa Ana		
Shelter	Persons	Families
Finca Piedra Pacha	100	25
Santaneco Gymnasium	260	52
Taller Vocacional (Por Estadio)	168	42
Ilamatepec Colony Community Centre	115	23
Sub Total	643	142
Department of Sonsonate		
Municipality of Juayua		
Shelter	Persons	Families
Espiritu Santo School	35	7
Community Centre	304	61
Benet School	15	3
Sub Total	354	71
Municipality of Nahuizalco		
Shelter	Persons	Families
Estado de Israel School	175	50
Nahuizalco School	45	15
Sub Total	220	65
TOTAL	2,102	455

In addition, volunteers will receive first aid kits, masks, gloves and protective glasses to assist them in their work in the affected areas.

Coordination

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society is part of the National Emergency Response System (SISNAE), which coordinates all of the government's disaster response activities via the National Emergency Operations Centre (COEN). Response activities, distributions of relief items, transportation of personnel and supplies, and damage and needs assessments are shared regularly between the National Society and COEN.

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