

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

COLOMBIA: GALERAS VOLCANO 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 183 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

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

The Galeras Volcano stands 4,270 metres high and is located in the Department of Nariño in south western Colombia, near the border with Ecuador. The volcano erupted at 10.58 hours and 14.30 hours (local time) on 12 July 2006, with ash plumes extending over 8 kilometres. Pyroclastic flow is reported as having reached Consacá at a distance of 30 kilometres. The Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (Ingeominas) issued a 'maximum' or 'Level 1' alert for the Galeras Volcano, following a strong explosive eruption, heard in various towns throughout the area. Rock falls occurred in the towns of La Florida, Ancuyá, Sandoná and Consacá. Colombian authorities declared a state of emergency in the surrounding areas, and ordered an immediate evacuation of some 2,220 families (8,500 people) to twelve temporary shelters in Pasto, Nariño and La Florida, established in anticipation of such an occurrence at the end of 2005. Last March, when the Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (Ingeominas) issued the first eruption alert, some 500 families (2,000 people) had already been evacuated from the areas most at risk. The city of Pasto, with 400,000 inhabitants, is not considered to be at risk for the moment. There have been no casualties reported to date.

Ingeominas does not rule out the possibility of additional eruptions in the near future. It remains unclear whether this eruption represents the end of volcanic activity as has been anticipated for some time, or is simply the precursor of a much larger eruption. A 'Level 2' alert had been in effect since 28 March 2006. The Colombian Government immediately activated its National Operations Committee (COE), of which the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRC) is a member.



Ash emissions from Galeras Volcano.
June 2006. Photo courtesy of the Colombian
Red Cross Society

Red Cross action

The Colombian Red Cross Society, already in a state of alert since March, immediately activated its crisis operations centres in Bogotá and Pasto. The Nariño Branch is in constant communication and coordination with local authorities from the Nariño Department and the municipalities of Pasto, La Florida and Nariño, as well as with the National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNAPD) regional and local committees.

The following measures have been taken by CRC as of 12 July:

1. 60 CRC health and relief personnel staff and volunteers are already in place, prepared to support evacuation and shelter operations;
2. A fleet of five 4x4 vehicles, six ambulances and one truck has been dispatched to the area – along with teams specialized in telecommunications, search and rescue and health care, to provide immediate logistical, assessment and emergency support as required.



3. 62 CRC members from adjoining Branches are on alert for immediate response, as well as an additional 206 volunteers available for deployment within 24 hours.
4. Five Injury Stabilization and Classification Modules (Módulos de estabilización y clasificación de heridos - MEC) have been activated and are ready for deployment to the affected areas as needed.

The Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), the Lima Regional Delegation and the Federation Representative in Colombia are monitoring the situation and are on stand-by for emergency response and support to the CRC. The French Red Cross delegate in Colombia, along with local staff from the DIPECHO - funded project, have also indicated their availability to assist as necessary.

The CRC has been supporting people living in temporary shelters and, since March 2005, preparing residents for the possibility that the situation may worsen. Just last week, the CRC up-dated its Contingency Plan, based on the increased activity of the Galeras Volcano.

Coordination and Information

The CRC, the Pan American Disaster Response Unit, the Lima Regional Delegation and the Ecuadorian Red Cross Society are ensuring on-going communication to coordinate actions and exchange information, as per the CRC's contingency plan.

The CRC and the Federation are also in constant communication with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to coordinate future operations in support of shelters and evacuations.

The CRC has issued a press release, urging the immediate evacuation of families still remaining in the high risk areas around the volcano.

A special page on the Federation's regional website at www.cruzroja.org has been created and will be up-dated on a regular basis, as the situation requires.

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