

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Colombia: Volcanoes

Information bulletin n° 1
18 January 2008

This bulletin is being issued for information only. On 17 January 2008, the Colombian Institute for Geology and Mining - Ingeominas - and the Observatory of Volcanology and Seismology of Pasto registered an explosive eruption of the Galeras volcano in the department of Nariño in southwest Colombia. The eruption, which took place at 20:06, was preceded by five seismic events from within the volcano on the 16 and 17 January. The Observatory of Volcanology and Seismology of Pasto has said that this eruption shows the high level of volcanic activity of Galeras, which is now at Level I, implying that an eruption is imminent or occurring.

According to Ingeominas, this event is considered significant as it is similar to those recorded in 1991 and 1992 and other eruptions registered between 2004 and 2006.

The Colombian Red Cross Society, with the support of the Federation, has determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

[*<click here for detailed contact information>*](#)



Source: Astronomic Observatory, University of Nariño. Picture by Alberto Quijano Vodniza, Mario Rojas Pereira.

The Situation

On 17 January 2008, the Colombian Institute for Geology and Mining - Ingeominas - and the Observatory of Volcanology and Seismology of Pasto registered an explosive eruption of the Galeras volcano in the department of Nariño in southwest Colombia. The eruption, which took place at 20:06 local time, was preceded by five seismic events from within the volcano on 16 and 17 January. According to geologists from Ingeominas the movement of the seismic events is described as "screw" ('tornillo' in Spanish) by the way it is registered on the seismograph.

The Observatory of Volcanology and Seismology of Pasto has said that this eruption shows the high level of volcanic activity of Galeras, which is now at Level I, implying that an eruption is imminent or occurring.

According to Ingeominas, this event is considered significant as it is similar to those recorded in 1991 and 1992 and other eruptions registered between 2004 and 2006. Pasto population explained that in the last two days there has been a strong smell of sulphur in the air caused by the reactivation of the seismic activity. Since this odour has preceded the serious 1992 and 1993 eruptions in 1992, as well as the lava flow in 1991, local residents and state authorities are on guard. At least 8,000 people live close to the volcano.

A coordination meeting was held by the regional emergency committee of Nariño at which the situation was and the results of the Damage and Needs Assessment were evaluated.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) is working to respond to the current situation and to prepare for possible developments. The CRCS headquarters and the regional branch in Nariño currently are coordinating a damage and needs assessment. To date no one has been injured nor homes damaged. The CRC has taken preventative measures by organizing 8 branches and a total of 60 CRC staff and volunteers with specialties in temporary shelter, telecommunications, logistics, water and sanitation, search and rescue, and assistance. Furthermore, the CRCS has activated an emergency team from the department of Valle del Cauca.

Evaluations are being carried out in the communities of Mapachico and Genoy, as the population has been displaced to shelters in Postobón, Rosales and Potrerros. These shelters have been functioning since the eruptions in 2006 and 2007.

Logistics mobilised to support actions on the ground include the identification of the following vehicles for the transportation and distribution of relief items:

- 1 truck (capacity to hold 10 tonnes)
- 2 pick ups (4 x 4)
- 2 ambulances
- 1 administrative vehicle
- 1 motorcycle

For the operation, a telecommunications Emergency Response Unit (ERU) is available to support these needs.

The International Federation, through the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for South America, have contacted the National Society and are on standby to provide support if needed.

How we work

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.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet 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.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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