

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Colombia: Volcano

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This bulletin is being issued for information only.

Since 19 April 2008, the Nevado del Huila volcano located between the departments of Cauca, Huila and Tolima, has been sporadically causing tremors and emitting gas and ashes. In addition, on 11 November an Information bulletin was issued informing the increase in activity of the Huila and the Machin volcanoes.

On the night of 20 November the Nevado del Huila volcano erupted leading to mud flows along the Paez river. Early warning and proper activation of the contingency plans allowed for immediate evacuation of thousands of people.

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) is still in the process of carrying out damage and needs assessments and does not require external support at this time.



Nevado del Huila Volcano in the department of Huila.
Source: INGEOMINAS

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The Situation

The Nevado del Huila volcano, located between the departments of Cauca, Huila and Tolima, has been in sporadic activity since 18 April 2008. After subsiding for a while, the volcano resumed activities in the first week of November 2008. According to reports received by the people living in the area, on 20 November the volcano erupted leading to two mud flows along the Paez river and affecting the road infrastructure of the region. At the moment, the eruption has stopped although the volcanic phenomenon continues emitting gases and ashes.

The Volcanic Ash Advisories Centre (VAAC) from Washington reported two columns of gas and ash reaching up to approximately 7,000 meters to 10,000 meters from the tip of the volcano. On the night of the eruption, the population living nearby the volcano was evacuated to safe zones, following the National System for Disaster Preparedness and Response (Sistema Nacional de Prevención y Atención de Desastres – SNPAD) Contingency Plan. In coordination with SNPAD, Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has led the evacuation of 6,000 people in the communities of Nataga, Tesalia, Paicol, Belalcazar, Inza and indigenous communities. . On 21 November, most families are returning to their homes with the exception of families whose houses were damaged.

According to the latest information available one person was injured and one is missing, but information is still flowing in from more remote communities. 25 houses and six bridges have sustained damages due to the mudslides. Also, access to roads in the municipality of Belalcazar, Cauca has been affected.

SNPAD has activated its operative systems and has increased monitoring over the Paez and Simbola rivers.

A flight took place to evaluate the damage to the areas surrounding the volcano, The Colombian President flew over the affected area on a especially schedule flight to evaluate the damage to the areas surrounding the volcano, the CRCS was also present.

The Colombian Mining and Geology Institute (Instituto Colombiano de Minería y Geología, INGEOMINAS) has been following the events closely and will continue to report any changes in the volcano's activity.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

From the onset of the emergency The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has been on high alert through local branches and the National Relief Department based in the National Society headquarters and has activated its crisis room. The contingency plan of the SNPAD, of which the CRCS is part, was immediately activated ensuring coordinated actions.

Local authorities in Belalcazar immediately activated the early warning system, and the CRCS has led the evacuation of 6,000 people from the municipalities of Nataga, Tesalia, Paicol and Belalcazar. Affected families are now starting returning to their homes, while some 25 families are not able to return because of damages to their homes.

The early warning system was installed in the area surrounding the volcano thanks to a DIPECHO project led by the Colombian Red Cross and SNPAD, with support by the French Red Cross. The project involved disaster preparedness activities such as early warning, school programmes for young people in disaster preparedness based on the risk of a volcanic eruption and carried out in indigenous languages, provisional shelters for evacuated families, and strengthening SNPAD and CRCS capacities and equipment. The project, based in 6 communities of Inza, Tesalia, Paicol, Belalcazar, Nataga and La Plata (all in the Department of Huila), has allowed for permanent communication with those communities in the event of the present volcanic eruption.

Thanks to these disaster preparedness activities, the CRCS managed to evacuate families affected by the eruption successfully and in time to avoid more losses of human lives.

The CRCS has activated search and rescue teams and 200 volunteers based in nearby branches in the Departments of Huila, Cauca, Valle, Tolima, Nariño and Cundinamarca. In coordination with SNPAD has started damage and need assessments in the affected areas early and will develop a plan of action based on this.

All actions have been coordinated with the SNPAD and the CRCS will continue to respond to the current situation and closely monitor and prepare any further developments.

The International Federation, through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for the Andean Region, has been in close contact with the CRCS and is 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

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

"improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

- 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

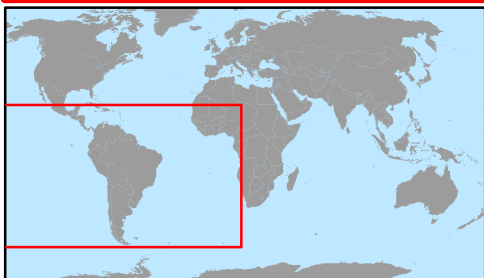
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