

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Ecuador: Tungurahua Volcano

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This bulletin is being issued for information only.

The activity of the Tungurahua volcano, located in the Andean region of Ecuador, has increased. During the first weekend of January alone, more than four explosions were registered per hour. According to the Ecuadorian Geophysics Institute it is possible that this activity could intensify in the coming days. The Institute explained that the internal activity of the volcano presents similar conditions to those which preceded the eruptions in July and August in 2006. The institute recommended that the authorities take precautionary measures, particularly those which could facilitate a rapid evacuation of the population at risk.

The Ecuadorian Red Cross, 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.

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The Tungurahua volcano is showing similar conditions to those before the eruptions in 2006. Source: AFP

The Situation

Since October 2007, the Tungurahua volcano has been showing sustained increased activity, particularly in the number and size of explosions. This activity increased on 29 December, when the number of explosions registered in one day exceeded 100. On 2 January 2008, the highest number of explosions was registered since September 2006. The Ecuadorian Geophysics Institute has said that this increase in activity shows similar conditions to those during the period before the eruptions in 2006.

The current state of the volcano is highly active, with ash and gas emissions registered reaching up to 2.5km high above the crater. At the same time, the constant release of gasses implies that there is no blockage in the main chamber of the volcano, which could cause an accumulation of pressure, reducing thereby the probability of a large and unexpected explosion. Loud noises or roars have been heard in sectors near the volcano. Falling ash on the 7 January was reported in communities located to the southwest of the volcano, in Choglontus, Manzano and Palitahua. The thick grey ash has covered crops and incandescent molten rock has also been seen.

On 7 January in Runtún, loud roars and earth tremors were felt. Seismic activity has intensified, and at present is similar to that registered in May 2006, previous to the eruptions and pyroclastic flows of July and August that same year.

The overall activity of the Tungurahua volcano appears to be intensifying particularly as increased explosions have been registered in the last few days.

On the 6 January, nearly 1,000 people were evacuated due to the intense volcanic activity, as a preventative measure.

Authorities are currently working at stage 1 of their Response Plan, which is normal to moderate explosive volcanic activity, accompanied by permanent gas emissions. As the volcano is currently showing intense activity, it is possible that this level be increased to stage 2, to respond to more intense activity including pyroclastic flows.

The national Civil Defence system is coordinating actions together with local governors and mayors. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working on the ground are also cooperating hence joining existing capacities.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Ecuadorian Red Cross (ERC) has alerted the branches in the four main provinces at risk from the volcano, Chimborazo, Tungurahua, Bolívar and Pastaza. In addition, damage and needs assessment (DANA) and Telecommunication and Information teams have been alerted. The ERC is participating in coordination meetings at the Emergency Response Centres (Centros de Operaciones de Emergencia - COE) and has mobilized a team from Quito to support the operation. The ERC national relief department is in permanent contact with the Ecuadorian Geophysics Institute and the different government ministries and agencies involved in the emergency. The International Federation, through the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for South America, have made contact with 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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