

Philippines: Volcanic Danger

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The Disaster

Mayon volcano near Legaspi City, one of 20 active volcanoes in the Philippines, has been spewing volcanic ash and sulphuric fumes since June 22. On 8 July the volume of ash increased from an average of 1,000 tons a day to 4,200 tons. Experts now fear that Mayon might suddenly erupt, endangering about 65,000 people living in the nearby towns of Tobaco, Guinobatan, Camalig, Santo Domingo and Ligao. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology has declared a "no-man" zone over a seven kilometre radius around the volcano. Mayon has erupted 44 times since 1616. The 1814 eruption, the worst on record, buried a town, killing 1, 200 people. Seventy-seven people died in the last major eruption in 1993.

The government has activated the National Disaster Co-ordinating Council (NDCC) at all levels and is ready to evacuate people to 52 pre-determined evacuation centres.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), which is a member of the NDCC, has mobilised a disaster response team of Red Cross staff and volunteers from Legaspi and five other chapters. The team comprises rescuers, first aiders, social workers, relief workers and nurses. The National Society has prepared relief supplies, mainly rice, sardines and medicine, drawn from its regional warehouse in Legaspi. It is also keeping a 24-hour watch on the situation, together with the NDCC. Beside stocking blood, the PNRC has also deployed additional vehicles and fielded a communication team with VHF radios.

Needs

The National Society, with long experience in disaster preparedness, has readied itself to assist in the event Mayon does erupt. The International Federation through its regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur is in communication with the PNRCS and is monitoring the situation. National Societies will be kept informed of major developments.

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