

750 PEVOLCA personnel working alongside local councils to ensure safety of La Palma

- **Authorities urge public to continue to take utmost care and stay away from the area for their own safety and to facilitate the work of emergency teams**
- **Ground deformation may have reached 28 centimetres**

At today's meeting today of the PEVOLCA Steering Committee, the authorities emphasised that the priority is to ensure the safety of the public and that every precaution must be taken given that the emergency is still ongoing. Speaking at a press conference afterwards, Spanish prime minister Pedro Sánchez reiterated calls to the population not to go near the eruption zone and to avoid using roads to allow civil protection teams to go about their work and carry out any evacuations required. Sánchez emphasised that the management of the crisis will not end when the lava reaches the sea but rather when all the necessary financial aid is in place to alleviate the damage caused.

For his part, the president of the Canary Islands, Ángel Víctor Torres, stated that the most important aspect so far is that nobody has been injured although he asked the population to continue to take all possible safety measures and follow the authorities' recommendations.

A total of 743 emergency and safety workers comprise the operation put in place by the various administrations to deal with the eruption on La Palma. They work in shifts and include personnel from the island's governing body (Cabildo), La Palma Volunteer Firefighters, the Tenerife and Gran Canaria Fire Brigades, BRIFOR forest fire crews, the Spanish army's Emergencies Unit (UME), PRESA units, Civil Guard, Emergency Intervention Group (GES), Spanish National Police, local police and the Canarian police force, in addition to council officials, civil protection personnel and other services from the various town halls in La Palma.

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The operation is supported by a total of 138 vehicles, a Forward Command Post of the Canarian government's Directorate General for Emergencies and Safety from which all the actions are coordinated, and 18 aircraft supplied by the Canarian government, Spain and island Cabildos.

The Steering Committee reported that a total of 5700 people have been evacuated to date, including 200 from Tacande last night. 132 people are staying in the temporary shelters set up by the authorities. In addition, some 400 tourists who were staying in hazard zones were transferred to accommodation in Tenerife during the early days of the emergency.

The evacuated districts include La Bombilla, El Remo, Puerto Naos, Las Manchas, Jedey, Charco Verde, El Charco, Todoque, La Laguna, San Nicolás and Tacande de Arriba up to Echedey, all of which are in the towns of Los Llanos de Aridane, El Paso and Tazacorte.

Continued irrigation water availability is conditional upon the Los Guirres water pipe avoiding damage and work has commenced on alternative piping. Irrigation has been authorised in nearby zones which have not yet been affected by the eruption.

Following the initial provisional assessment, 185 buildings appear to have been damaged, 63 of them homes according to Land Registry data.

PEVOLCA Plan technical director Miguel Ángel Morcuende reported that there are currently two lava flows: one to the north, which is approaching Todoque, and one further south, which is barely moving.

According to the PEVOLCA Scientific Committee, when the lava reaches the coast the interaction with the sea may trigger explosions, gas emissions and cause it to split.

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The Committee recommends a 2km exclusion zone around the emission spots to minimise the risk of impact by pyroclasts and exposure to gases. The public are urged to stay away from the lava flows due to the risk of exposure to gases, possible landslides and the high temperatures. The committee also recommends stepping up information to the public to enable them to take measures to protect themselves against the danger posed by ash given off by the vents.

The Scientific Committee notes in its report that the eruption continues to exhibit the same Strombolian fissure eruption style, in a NW-SE fissure. Activity is concentrated in four main vents, the last of which opened on Monday at 19:56 (local time). This new vent presents effusive activity, with lava emissions running parallel to earlier ones. It is located very near the other active vents. A UME drone overflight has indicated no other changes and what was thought to be a further new vent was in fact lava being expelled from an existing vent, which has recommenced its activity. The lava is moving at an average speed of 200 metres per hour as it makes its way towards the sea and its maximum thickness is approximately 10-12 m.

Later on Monday, a surface earthquake with a magnitude of 3.8 mbLg and III-IV intensity was recorded south-east of Tazacorte at 21:32, and was followed by two further earthquakes which were also felt south-west of El Paso.

Earlier estimates of the volcanic gas emissions, which can reach heights of 3000 metres (according to Toulouse VAAC), remain valid. Daily sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions into the atmosphere caused by the eruption are currently estimated at between 8000 and 10,600 tonnes.

The experts note that the amplitude of the volcanic tremor signal recorded in seismic stations is falling, probably due to the concentration of Strombolian activity in fewer vents. Land deformations have also slowed and have been relatively stable in the last 12 hours. INSAR measurement of the average deformation indicates a maximum cumulative average of 28 cm.

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In terms of weather conditions, recent hours have brought a change in wind direction at middle-low troposphere levels, around 3000 metres. The change from W to N/NE has caused displacement of the plume towards the southwest of the emission source. On the western side of the island affected by the eruption, breezes of between 10 to 20 km/h are forecast, with NE winds prevailing at upper levels. Acid rain is ruled out in the coming 24 hours.

The Scientific Committee reports also that numerical modelling of the size of the lava flows continues, as does monitoring of their speed of advance and size. Daily monitoring of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions from the focal points of the eruption also continues using helicopter-mounted remote optical sensors. The chemical composition of the plumes is being monitored using multi-gas sensors. Ash and lava samples are collected regularly and both field inspections and observations using drones are being carried out.

Given its thickness at certain points, break-ups of the lava may occur and lead to the formation of large fragments of lava in steeper parts that may travel further once they detach from the front of the flow. Small pyroclastic flows are also possible on very steep slopes.

Continuous monitoring of the seismic activity has been increased and any significant change observed will be notified. The public are asked to be on the alert for information issued by the Civil Protection authorities through official channels and the media.

Red alert level

The PEVOLCA Plan establishes a “volcanic traffic light” public alert mechanism. The traffic light consists of four colours according to the level of risk: green, yellow, amber and red. At the red level, compulsory evacuation of hazard zones is implemented.

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In this regard, the public are asked to follow the instructions of and cooperate with the law enforcement agencies during evacuation, to keep calm and not spread unfounded rumours. In the event of an evacuation, local Town Halls will provide details of evacuation routes and designated meeting points. Evacuation will only take place when required by the situation.

Recommendations include closing all outside windows and doors, lower shutters and turn off water, gas and electricity.

Take a backpack with your personal identification documentation, daily medication, mobile phone and charger, a battery-operated radio, torch and clothes for approximately three days. Only use your phone when strictly necessary.

Go to the designated meeting points and, if you do need to go to a shelter, you should go to the registration area on arrival.

At the red alert level, instructions are also issued for protection against ashfall. Do not go near the volcano or lava flows for any reason.

If volcanic ash is falling, stay indoors until it has settled unless the roof is in danger of collapsing.

Avoid going out but if you do, cover your nose and mouth with a mask to avoid inhaling ash directly. Protect your eyes with goggles, use glasses instead of contact lenses and cover your mouth with a damp cloth. Avoid doing physical exercise outdoors.

If ash is falling, close doors, windows and all ventilation sources (chimney vents, heating, air conditioning, etc.). Clear ash from flat roofs and rain gutters, and keep water tanks and cisterns covered.

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Do not allow ash to come into contact with food. Wash fruit and vegetables well and do not eat food outdoors.

Collect built-up ash in plastic bags and place in rubbish bins. Do not throw it down drains.

Avoid driving when ash is present. If you have to drive, take extra care and keep your speed below 40 km/h.

Volcanic ash is made up of very fine particles that can cause lesions to respiratory tracts, eyes and open wounds, as well as skin irritation.

Keep vehicle engines switched off. Driving can stir up ash, engines can clog, and your vehicle might break down.

If you feel an earthquake when indoors, take cover in a doorway or under solid furniture such as a table and stay well away from windows. Do not use lifts. If you have to leave your home, turn off the water, gas and electricity.

If you are outdoors, stay away from tall buildings, street lights, advertising hoardings, etc. If you are near the sea, keep away from the shore.

Please remember that the Canarian government's 112 telephone number is for emergency use only. If you require general information on the situation, you should dial 012 or follow the news on the media.

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