

King and Queen attend PEVOLCA Steering Committee and meet with Scientific Committee

- **Sulphur dioxide levels indicate air quality is good; acid rain ruled out**
- **Public advised to stay indoors in the event of ash fall. When outdoors, FFP2 face masks and eye protection are advised. Surgical masks recommended elsewhere on the island.**
- **Lava reaches 3800 metres in length and is 2100 metres from the sea**

The King and Queen of Spain presided over today's meeting of the Steering Committee of the Canary Islands' Volcano Emergencies Plan (PEVOLCA), which reported on the evolution of the La Palma eruption and the ongoing emergency situation on the island. The monarchs were accompanied by Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, the president of the Canary Islands, Ángel Víctor Torres, and the president of the La Palma Cabildo, Mariano Hernández Zapata, as well as by the region's minister for security and PEVOLCA director, Julio Pérez.

The Plan's technical director, Miguel Ángel Morcuende, outlined the current situation and immediate outlook of the emergency, while the scientific committee's spokeswoman reported on the committee's latest conclusions.

The meeting heard that the strombolian-type eruption is still ongoing, with more explosive phases, four vents, a plume that now reaches 4500 metres, and substantial ash emissions. The current trade wind conditions mean that acid rain is ruled out.

In the area worst affected by ash fall, the public are advised to stay indoors and, if they need to be outside, to wear FFP2 masks and eye protection. The use of surgical masks is advised elsewhere on the island.

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Referring to the lava, the director and spokeswoman reported that there are still two active flows, which are advancing relatively slowly. They continue to move further from the source of the eruption and one of the two has a front 500 metres wide. The more northern flow has almost come to a halt, travelling at a mere 1 metre/hour yesterday, and has a maximum height of 12 metres. For its part, the southern front, which is encircling Montaña Rajada, travelled at 4-5 metres/hour yesterday.

The total area affected currently stands at 220 hectares, with a perimeter of 15.7 kilometres. The lava is 3800 metres in length and 2100 metres from the sea.

The Steering Committee reported that the number of persons evacuated remains unchanged at 5700. Only 135 of these were being housed in the El Fuerte army barracks (Breña Baja) and, of this number, 86 have been transferred to a hotel in Fuencaliente. Of the 49 remaining, 28 are in the care of the Canarian Health Service and the other 19 have opted to continue in the barracks.

The emergency operation comprises a total of 789 security and emergency personnel from town halls, island Cabildos and the Canarian and Spanish governments, together with volunteer workers.

The different administrations have out in place a series of initiatives to address the urgent housing needs of families who have lost their homes. An estimated 300 homes are situated within the lava perimeter.

The authorities reiterated their calls to the public to facilitate the work of the emergency services and observe the exclusion zone of 2.5 km around the vents recommended by scientists to minimise the risk of impact of pyroclasts and exposure to volcanic gases. The public are also asked to stay away from the lava flows due to the risk posed by possible landslides and the high temperatures, and they should take all possible precautions with respect to falling ash to avoid potential damage to their health.

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The 2-mile maritime exclusion zone established by the authorities along the coast from Punta del Pozo (Puerto Naos) in the south to Las Viñas Beach (Tazacorte) in the north remains in force.

In addition, Spain's Air Navigation Authority (ENAIRE) has established two air traffic restriction zones over the municipalities of El Paso and Los Llanos de Aridane as a temporary measure until the end of the emergency. Air space below 3000 feet over sea and land may only be used by law enforcement agencies, the emergency services, official state aircraft and other authorised aircraft. The restrictions do not affect commercial flights as these do not overfly the two restricted areas.

King and Queen meet Scientific Committee

Following the meeting of the Steering Committee, the King and Queen met personally with members of the Scientific Committee, who had attended the earlier meeting by videoconference, and received additional updates on the situation. They sought clarification from the committee members on various aspects and invited their views on the progress of the eruption.

The Committee reported that the eruption continues to exhibit the same strombolian fissure eruption style in a NW-SE fissure, with intermittent phases of greater explosivity in recent hours, as has occurred previously. The eruption plume has reached 5 km above sea level, according to measurements taken at 08:00 today.

The lava has two active fronts. The more northerly and bigger of the two advanced more slowly yesterday (approximately 1 m/h) and has a maximum height of 12 m. The more southerly one, which is encircling Montaña Rajada, advanced more rapidly yesterday (approximately 5 m/h) and has a maximum height of 10 m.

In terms of weather conditions, the wind remains NE with speeds of 15-25 Km/h at low levels (up to 2000 metres). On the western side of the island, near the eruption zone, the prevailing winds will continue to be breezes (sea breezes by day and land

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breezes at night). At 3000 metres, the light NW wind (5-13 Km/h) will change to SW from tonight, reaching speeds of around 20 km/h. Due to this predominant wind direction at middle to low troposphere levels (3000-5000 metres), the volcanic ash affected flights this morning. Acid rain is ruled out during the next 24 hours. It is important to note that acid rain affects vegetation if it is persistent, whereas a sporadic event has no effect.

Seismicity remains low, with few earthquakes felt, although further ones are not ruled out. Yesterday brought long period earthquakes associated with the explosive activity. The volcanic tremor signal increased during the eruptions, reflecting the eruptive dynamics. Land deformations continue to be stable.

Estimations of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions into the atmosphere caused by the eruption increased yesterday with respect to the previous day, exceeding 12,000 tonnes daily. Linear concentrations of SO₂ have also increased. Gas and ash emissions now reach altitudes of 4500 m according to the Toulouse VAAC. SO₂ levels measured by air quality monitoring stations indicate that the air quality is good.

The increased ash emissions and ash falling into the sea may be affecting the marine ecosystem along the La Palma coast, potentially leading to drastic changes in productivity. Accordingly, systems for monitoring volcanic materials in the sea water column will be increased.

Numerical modelling of the extent 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 monitored using multi-gas sensors. Ash and lava samples are collected regularly and field inspections and observations using drones are being carried out.

Given its thickness at certain points, break-ups of the lava front may occur and lead to the formation of large fragments of lava in steeper parts. Depending on the terrain,

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these may quickly reach distances of several metres from the flow front after detachment. Small pyroclastic flows are also possible on very steep slopes.

Should the lava reach the coast, interaction with the sea could trigger columns of water vapour with acid gases and the lava front could separate, with fragments ejected close to the point of contact (instant fragmentation and emission of ballistics).

Accordingly, continuous monitoring of the seismic activity has been further increased and any significant change observed will be notified.

Red alert remains in force

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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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 via the media.