

160 people living near volcano evacuated as safety precaution

- **Most spend night with relatives and friends. 12 are being accommodated in a Fuencaliente hotel and 10 persons with reduced mobility in army barracks**
- **PEVOLCA technical director highlights need to take protection measures against falling ash**

The ongoing eruption of the Cumbre Vieja volcano during Friday afternoon forced evacuation procedures to be implemented once more under the Volcano Emergencies Plan (PEVOLCA), this time for the villages of Tajuya and Tacande de Abajo and the hitherto unevacuated part of Tacande de Arriba, all in the municipality of Los Llanos de Aridane. A total of 160 people were evacuated, with most opting to spend the night with relatives or friends. Twelve people are being accommodated in the Teneguía Princess Hotel in Fuencaliente, while a further 10 with reduced mobility have been taken to the El Fuerte army barracks to be cared for. Almost 6000 people have been evacuated since the eruptions began last Sunday.

Volcanic surveillance measurements carried out since the beginning of the eruption recorded the highest-energy activity so far during Friday afternoon. Following recommendations from the scientific committee, the PEVOLCA authorities decided to order the evacuation of the residents as a precautionary measure, with further evacuations contemplated if required by the evolution of the eruption.

The measure was ordered in view of the risk, according to the scientists, that volcanic materials might be ejected across greater distances and that ash fall and very hot materials could spread beyond the current exclusion zone. Vibrations and detonations might also be experienced.

The director of Spain's National Geological Institute (IGN) in the Canary Islands, María José Blanco, explained that the biggest seismic signal so far in the main cone of Cumbre Vieja was recorded at around 13.00. Following several violent processes, the

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decision was taken to protect residents of an area near the vent who had not yet been evacuated. The residents were initially ordered to remain indoors as protection from emissions of volcanic particles and were advised to close all doors and windows, as well as to stay away from windows due to the risk that the blasts might shatter glass.

Blanco added that, shortly after the ‘stay indoors’ order was given, it became apparent that two new vents were producing high volumes of flowing lava. Given the possibility that a fissure might destabilise a section of the main cone, evacuation was ordered.

Dangers to the population included the possibility of very hot, low-viscosity and highly-gaseous lava making its way across land features, rock fragments being ejected greater distances, and the dense layer of ash. The worst-case scenario, added Blanco, was the partial or total collapse of the eruption cone, which would generate flows of high-speed lava that might spread laterally.

PEVOLCA technical director Miguel Ángel Morcuende stated that the phenomenon continues to be monitored very closely and that on detection of the increasingly intense volcano activity, reflected in the ejection of larger pyroclasts, local residents were asked to remain indoors, with the change in the situation subsequently making evacuation necessary. He stressed the dynamic nature of the phenomenon, which means that the safety of the public must be the priority at all times.

Pedro Sánchez chairs morning meeting of Steering Committee

The Steering Committee meeting on Friday was attended by Spanish prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, who highlighted the magnificent cooperation and coordination demonstrated by all the different administrations to resolve the immediate and future problems of the people of La Palma and rebuild the island after the eruption. Sánchez - who was accompanied by the president of the Canary Islands, Ángel Víctor Torres, regional security minister and director of PEVOLCA, Julio Pérez, and the president of La Palma’s governing council (Cabildo), Mariano Hernández Zapata - said that the

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emergency is serving to demonstrate the exemplary unity of all the administrations involved and this has to continue afterwards when the time comes to deal with the reconstruction of La Palma.

The various administrations have put in place the necessary initiatives to address the housing needs of families who have lost their homes. An estimated 400 buildings and infrastructures inside the lava perimeter have been wholly or partly damaged. The figure includes houses, farm sheds, swimming pools and water reservoirs, as well as other buildings which still have to be assessed.

The emergency operation comprises almost 800 security and emergency personnel from town halls, island Cabildos and the Canarian and Spanish governments, together with volunteer workers.

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 (Tzacorte) in the north remains in force.

In addition, Spain's Air Navigation Authority (ENAI) 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 they do not overfly the two restricted areas.

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