

## **Sánchez meets with PEVOLCA Steering and Scientific Committees again and reiterates La Palma commitment**

- **Lava flows have slowed by mid-day Saturday; lava from volcano is redistributing across multiple flows**
- **Area affected by eruption now estimated at 848 hectares, 3.4 more than yesterday**
- **429 people currently being accommodated in hotels: 373 in the Fuencaliente hotel and 56 in Los Llanos de Aridane; a further 46 are staying in community health centres.**

Spanish premier Pedro Sánchez and the president of the Canary Islands, Ángel Víctor Torres, took part in today's meeting of the Steering Committee of the Canary Islands' Volcano Emergencies Plan (PEVOLCA), which is headed by the Canarian minister for public administrations, justice and security, Julio Pérez. The meeting reviewed developments in the ongoing volcano eruption on the basis of the daily report from the Scientific Committee. The lava speed has slowed, with lava from the volcano redistributing itself across the different flows. The progress of the flows is being monitored closely, with particular attention focusing on the one nearest the district of La Laguna to determine its likely direction of travel.

On his fifth visit to La Palma, prime minister Sánchez expressed his gratitude to the people of the island, the scientists and all the services dealing with the emergency for their work in a "situation that remains critical". He reiterated the Spanish government's commitment to the island and its institutions for the reconstruction of the island.

Referring to the evolution of the eruption, PEVOLCA technical director Miguel Ángel Morcuende reported that the lava flows have slowed down and the lava from the volcano is redistributing itself across several of them (including the oldest one) due to

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small partial ruptures of the cinder cone on the northwest slope of the main cone and to the presence of volcanic tubes. The lava slowdown has allowed homeowners to return accompanied to their properties to collect items under relatively normal conditions.

The flow affecting La Laguna continues to be at a standstill in the centre of the district but it is under constant monitoring to assess whether it will travel north or south of La Laguna Mountain.

There are 429 people being accommodated in hotels at present. Of these, 56 are in a hotel in Los Llanos de Aridane and 373 in Fuencaliente. All are being cared for by the Red Cross in coordination with local social services. In addition, 46 dependent persons are being accommodated in community health centres.

At the post-meeting press conference, the head of volcano surveillance at Spain's National Geographic Institute (IGN), Carmen López, reported that seismicity continues to be recorded at the same depths, although it has increased in intensity at intermediate depths. Stronger earthquakes felt by the population cannot be ruled out.

Ground deformation is stable in the vicinity of the volcanic cone but is displaying a deflationary trend in areas furthest away from the eruption zone.

Air quality is improving thanks to the increased altitude of the temperature inversion layer and the reduction in airborne particulate matter. Nonetheless, the PEVOLCA technical director reiterated that FFP2 masks should still be worn by persons suffering from a health or respiratory condition and their use by the general public is also recommended.

Given the forecast of light rain in the Aridane Valley, Morcuende emphasised the importance of clearing ash from roofs as rain increases the weight of the ash. He also alerted to the risk of potential runoff due to the non-permeability of the lava flows.

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## **Infrastructure affected**

A total of 848.96 hectares have now been affected by the eruption, 3.4 more than the figure reported yesterday. The maximum width between the far edges of the lava flows remains at approximately 2900 metres, although some parts within this area have not been affected by lava.

Figures from the Land Register indicate that the number of buildings destroyed or damaged by the eruption remains unchanged at 1280, of which 1030 are residential, 132 agricultural, 64 industrial, 30 leisure and hospitality, 11 public use and 14 used for other purposes.

The Steering Committee also reviewed the situation of essential public services (electricity, phones, schools), with no incidents of note recorded, and the progress of work on the portable desalination plants in Puerto Naos, for which initial connection tests are already underway today.

Meanwhile, the Forward Command Post which is coordinating the emergency effort has been moved from the Visitors Centre in El Paso to the old JTI tobacco factory in the town, situated on the LP-3 road at the junction with Avenida Venezuela. The move has been ordered to improve both the operational conditions of the services dealing with the emergency and the comfort of users.

## **Daily Scientific Committee Report**

Prior to the meeting of the Steering Committee, the Plan's Scientific Committee met and heard the findings of its members on the evolution of the eruption since yesterday. The Scientific Committee is coordinated by the Canary Island government's Directorate General for Safety and Emergencies and comprises representatives of Spain's National Geographical Institute (IGN), Science Research Council (CSIC), Canarian Institute of Vulcanology (Involcan), Spanish Geological and Mining Institute (IGME), National Institute of Meteorology (AEMET), National Oceanographic Institute (IEO), and the universities of La Laguna and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

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Its conclusions were as follows:

“The fissure eruption continues to display a strombolian mechanism (a hybrid mechanism with, simultaneously, phases of explosivity that produce pyroclast deposits and effusive phases that trigger lava flows). The effusive phases are more common at present. In vulcanology, the magnitude of volcanic eruptions is measured on the Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) on a scale of 0 to 8; the estimated VEI of the present eruption is 2 so far.

The main lava flow is along the north flank; it is currently travelling on the northern margins of older flows in two directions (west and north-west) within the existing exclusion zone. At the exit of the vent, the flow is concentrated in a tiered lava channel, which subsequently branches into channels and volcanic tubes. The vents in the cone are still active, continuously ejecting pyroclasts and with intermittent phreatomagmatic pulses. One of the cones is emitting lava only.

The emergence of new vents in the vicinity of the main cone cannot be ruled out, nor can other surface observables (visible gas emissions) inside the exclusion zone.

The morphology of the cone is changing repeatedly due to the successive growth and reconfiguration processes. Small partial ruptures of the cinder cone on the NW slope of the main cone have been occurring since last night. The eruption process can consist of episodes of higher and lower strombolian activity, together with pulses with phreatomagmatic activity.

The ash and gas column height has been measured today at 3000 m.

The prevailing winds continue to be NE - easterly at higher altitude - although it is forecast to veer south between 3000 and 5000 m. The ash and SO<sub>2</sub> cloud is currently situated southwest of the eruption zone and is expected to move west-northwest in the coming hours. The anticipated position of the plume is positive for flights. Light rain has fallen in the north and east of La Palma and this rainfall (light to locally moderate)

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is likely to continue for the rest of Saturday and also on Sunday and Monday. The rain will fall mainly in the north and east, although in some inland and western parts also. The effects of the temperature inversion (3-4°C) situated between 1500 and 2000 m and the local winds in the El Paso, Los Llanos and Tazacorte area are producing a convergence zone favourable to SO<sub>2</sub> accumulation in this basin.

Seismicity continues to be largely concentrated close to that of early days, at depths of between 10 and 15 km, with increased frequency and magnitude. Earthquakes deeper than 20 km are being recorded also and these continue to be high magnitude, even if less frequent, in recent hours. The high amplitude values of the tremor signal remain unchanged, with intensification pulses. The highest magnitude recorded is 4.3 mbLg with intensity IV EMS, from an event 36 km deep. The seismicity at intermediate and deep depths is part of the same current eruption process. No significant surface seismicity is being recorded at present. Current levels continue to suggest that more earthquakes may be felt by the population, possibly reaching intensities of VI (EMS), with minor rockfalls possible on steep slopes. Relevant information on this aspect is included in the Recommendations section below.

The pattern of land deformation is stable in the vicinity of the eruption zone, with slight regional deflation of a deep origin detected in stations furthest away.

During yesterday (22/10), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emissions associated with the volcanic plume (visible emissions of volcanic gases) remained high and in accordance with the eruption process, reaching 31600 tonnes per day (underestimated value). The diffuse emission of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) associated with the 220 km<sup>2</sup> of the Cumbre Vieja volcanic rift (non-visible emissions of volcanic gases) has continued to fall over the last 10 days and has been estimated at 623 tonnes per day on 22/10. Diffuse CO<sub>2</sub> emissions monitored at the Los Llanos geochemical station (LP10) show a higher magmatic-hydrothermal fraction than that observed at the Fuencaliente station (LP08). All these geochemical observations are consistent with the current eruption process.

Regarding air quality, sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) values since last night reflect high

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concentrations at the Los Llanos, El Paso, Tazacorte and Puntagorda stations. Average hourly values have increased significantly overnight and during the early part of today. At 9:00, the Los Llanos station recorded the third consecutive hourly value above 500  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , the threshold for alerting the population.

The Tazacorte and El Paso stations also recorded hourly averages above 500  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  during this period. Although this did not occur over three consecutive hours, there is a risk that these levels may be reached and trigger the conditions for alerting the population of the Aridane Valley.

Concentrations of particles of less than 10 microns (PM10) were generally lower yesterday than on previous days and did not exceed the daily limit of 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  at any of the air quality monitoring stations.

## **OBLIGATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **SEA PLUME:**

- Particular attention should be paid to the wind forecast to monitor possible changes in direction by the sea plume and act accordingly, particularly in the case of persons with weakened respiratory systems (asthma sufferers, for example) as they are more vulnerable to lower concentrations.
- Eye flushing is also recommended after every exposure given that symptoms are often not felt until later.
- Sea plumes can be noted up to several kilometres from the source, albeit in a more diluted form. If a plume reaches residential areas, the public are advised to stay indoors if possible and close all doors and windows.
- For safety reasons, research vessels undertaking scientific work in the zone are recommended to keep a distance of at least 500 m in zones with active lava deltas (fed by lava and with visible manifestations) and 200 m in more stable zones. Sailing for scientific purposes related to the management of the emergency is authorised at closer distances on the responsibility of the vessel owner and captain, provided that approval

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has been sought from the PEVOLCA technical management and Harbourmaster.

### **LAVA FLOWS:**

- The public are also advised not to go near the lava flows due to the risk posed by exposure to gases, possible rockfalls and the high temperatures.
- 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, these may travel distances of several metres from the flow front very quickly after detachment. Small pyroclastic flows are also possible on very steep slopes.

### **FALLING PYROCLASTS:**

- The public are reminded that an exclusion zone with a radius of 2.5 km has been established around the vents to minimise the risk of impact of pyroclasts and exposure to volcanic gases.
- If explosive activity becomes more intense, some violent detonations may cause windows to break. People are advised to stay away from windows up to 5 km from the cone.
- In areas affected by heavy ash fall (where ground deposits are clearly seen) and particularly if haze is visible, the public are advised to stay indoors. When outdoors, the wearing of FFP2 masks and goggles is recommended.
- If ash reaches other islands, the wearing of surgical masks is recommended. Roof terraces with ash deposits of several centimetres should be cleaned. The procedure recommended by the civil protection authorities for ash removal from roofing and floors (moisten the ash, protect eyes, wear a mask, protect skin, etc, see attached document) should be followed closely. FFP2 masks and gloves should be worn when clearing ash, which should be moistened slightly before brushing. Blowers should not be used except for cleaning of airport premises by specialist personnel wearing appropriate PPE. Blowers increase the resuspension of the particulates most harmful to health.

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For their safety, scientists working on land inside the exclusion zone are advised to stay at least 1000 m from the main emission zone. They may move closer for scientific observations related to the management of the emergency, with the approval of the PEVOLCA technical authorities.

At distances of less than 3km from the current emission zone in the southern sector and inside the exclusion zone, particular attention should be paid to any observable phenomena and exposure should be kept to a minimum.

## **SEISMIC MOVEMENTS**

- The PEVOLCA scientific committee monitors the volcanic activity constantly.
- Take preventive measures both at work and at home: secure bookshelves and lamps, and remove large objects from furniture.

### Outdoors:

If you are outdoor when an earthquake occurs, head for open spaces and stay clear of structures that might fall to the ground, Stay away also from areas at risk of landslide. For your own safety, please remember the following self-protection recommendations:

- Head for open spaces.
- Stay away from buildings, balconies, traffic lights, street lights, overhead cables and trees.
- Stay clear of areas at risk of landslides/rockfalls.
- Follow the recommendations issued by the authorities and keep up to date with news from official sources and the media.
- If in a vehicle, reduce your speed and, when possible, switch off your engine -away from buildings and hilly areas. Turn on your hazard lights and stay in the vehicle until the earthquake ends.

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### Indoors:

If an earthquake occurs when you are indoors, remain calm and follow these self-protection recommendations:

- Do not go outside during the earthquake.
- Take shelter in a doorway or under a solid piece of furniture such as a table.
- Stay away from windows.
- If you need to leave your home, turn off the water, gas and electricity.
- In case of evacuation, use the stairs not the lift.
- Follow the recommendations issued by the authorities and keep up to date with information from official sources and the media.

People in La Palma are advised to wear FFP2 masks when outdoors.

Exclusion zones at sea and on land must still be observed to ensure the safety of the population.

Continuous monitoring of seismic activity has been stepped up and any significant change observed will be notified. Be on the alert for information issued by the appropriate Civil Protection authorities.”

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