THE PHILIPPINE STAR
news
SATURDAY | JANUARY 27, 2018

Phl prepares for 3-month-long Mayon emergency

The country is bracing for a possible three-month-long emergency in areas around Mayon Volcano, which has already displaced more than 81,000 and caused overcrowding at temporary shelters, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said yesterday.

Mayon remained at alert level 4, a notch below the highest level, as it continued to spew out lava, ash and other superheated material, volcanologists said.

"We're gearing up for three months" of emergency, said Romina Marasigan, spokesperson for NDRRMC, citing similar situations during previous eruptions of the 8,077-foot volcano.

Displaced families may need to stay in evacuation centers for that long, she said.

Respiratory illnesses are possible because of the series of ash falls, Marasigan said.

"We remain on red alert," Marasigan told a media briefing, adding that 69,672 evacuees were housed in schools while nearly 12,000 took shelter in tents or went to relatives in more secure locations.

The Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office (APSEMO) is adopting the so-called inter-municipality evacuation in order to decongest cramped evacuation centers if an affected town or city could no longer accommodate their evacuees.

APSEMO said they would conduct inventories of occupants to determine which evacuation camps would be decongested first.

Food and other supplies remain adequate but concerns are growing over health and hygiene conditions at all the 69 temporary shelters away from the danger zone.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said fast lanes have been activated in department hospitals, particularly in Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital and Bicol Medical Center, to serve those displaced by the eruption.

Health workers are giving free checkups and medicine to elderly women and children in evacuation centers, but there are not enough toilets.

Albay provincial health officer physician Antonio Ludovice said P2 million from the DOH was earmarked for the construction of latrines and repair of toilets at evacuation sites.

"The province is doing everything to close the gaps for these toilet facilities," said Nestor Santiago, assistant secretary at the DOH.

Department of Social Welfare and Development officer-in-charge undersecretary Emmanuel Leyco said the DSWD is preparing to provide psychosocial intervention measures for evacuees who have been traumatized by the series of eruptions of Mayon.

Between 6:11 a.m. last Thursday to 2:31 a.m. yesterday, seven episodes of intense but sporadic lava fountaining from the summit crater lasting 26 to 57 minutes occurred.

The lava fountains reached 150 to 500 meters high and generated ash plumes that reached 500 meters to three kilometers above the crater.

A total of 15 volcanic earthquakes, 19 tremor events, seven of which corresponded to the lava fountaining events, one episode of pyroclastic density currents generation from lava collapse, and numerous rockfall events were recorded by Mayon's seismic monitoring network.

* VOLCANOES
* NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (NDRRMC)

The Philippine Star
news
Saturday, January 27, 2018

2

Phl prepares for 3-month-long Mayon emergency

Rockfall events were generated by the collapsing lava front and margins of the advancing lava flow on the Miisi and Bonga gullies. Currently, the Miisi and Buyuan lava flows have maintained their advance to three kilometers and one kilometer, respectively, from the summit crater.

Sulfur dioxide gas emission was measured at an average of 1,916 tons per day last Jan. 25.

Electronic tilt and continuous global positioning system measurements indicate a sustained swelling or inflation of the edifice since November and October last year, consistent with pressurization by magmatic intrusion.

For its part, the Philippine Coast Guard was set to transport 8,000 food packs to Albay residents displaced by the eruption and temporarily taking shelter in evacuation centers.

The number of cancelled flights has risen to 97, the disaster agency said.

The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) yesterday said the high volume of ash Mayon spews toward the sky poses a risk to international flights passing Albay.

Erick Apolonio, CAAP spokesperson at Legazpi airport, said flights to Legazpi and Naga airports were cancelled up to Jan. 31.

"We know that volcanic ash sucked by plane engines and air-conditioning poses high risk to the aircraft while silica poses health risk to passengers," said Apolonio.

Flights from Japan, Singapore, Papua New Guinea pass Albay before landing at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport so CAAP "urged them to consider precautionary measures, prompting other airlines to cancel their flights due to high column of volcanic ash," Apolonio said.

Legazpi Airport resumed operations yesterday after it closed down for several days.

The Australian government donated 6,000 pieces of non-food items to the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) for the affected families.

Sen. Richard Gordon, chairman of PRC, thanked Australian Ambassador Amanda Gorely for her government's assistance.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishol last Wednesday said her government pledged P31.6 million (AU$775,000) worth of humanitarian support to individuals affected by the eruption.

The aid will include the provision of tarpaulins, sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets, jerry cans and hygiene supplies to 30,000 individuals.

"We have provided as we always do because we are a good friend of the Philippines. Unfortunately, there has been a spike of natural disasters in the last few months in which we provided humanitarian assistance to help the families evacuated and affected by flood and most recently with the Mayon eruption. That is continuous," Gorely earlier said.

– With Celso Amo, Sheila Crisostomo, Cet Dematera, Evelyn Macairan, Paolo Romero, Elizabeth Marcelo, Rainier Allan Ronda, Jaime Laude, Rudy Santos, Louella Desiderio, Reuters