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DENR: Water around Mayon not safe

LEGAZPI CITY – At least 29 river channels around Mayon Volcano are silted with volcanic ash, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

These river channels are in Barangays Masarawag, Manila and Nasisi in Guinobatan; Nasisi, Amtic and Tambo in Ligao; Tumpa, Sua, Quirangay and Anoling in Camalig; Anoling, Miisi and Yawa in Daraga; Buyuan, Padang, Bonga, Matanag, Mabinit and Pawa in Legazpi; Basud and Lidong in Sto. Domingo; Bonga in Bacacay; Bulawan in Malilipot, and Bantayan, Tabiguan, Tagas, San Vicente, San Antonio, Quinastillohan, Namutuga, Tabiguan and Buang in Tabaco.

"Water in these river channels are not safe to drink and not advisable for washing clothes as well as for taking a bath because it can cause skin irritation due to sulfur," Oscar Dominguez, DENR-Bicol executive director, said yesterday.

Dominguez said volcanic ash contains sulfur dioxide, which affects the respiratory system.

He said the quality of air in Camalig, Guinobatan, Ligao, Oas and Polangui has improved since two weeks ago when Mayon's activity slowed down.

Cedric Daep, Albay provincial security and emergency management office head, also warned of lahar flow during heavy rains.

Ed Laguerta, Mayon resident volcanologist, said the volcano extruded around 62 million cubic meters of volcanic debris since it erupted last Jan. 13.

'Generally quiet' lava flow

Mayon's activity in the past 24 hours was characterized by "generally quiet" lava effusion, degassing from the crater and a brief lava fountain that reached 200 meters.

Laguerta said Mayon's alert level could not yet be lowered despite a drop in the number of volcanic quakes from 143 on Wednesday to only seven in the past 24 hours.

On reports that the volcano spewed ash and gas from fissures that it incurred, Laguerta clarified that Mayon has only one opening or vent.

"In all recorded eruptions of Mayon, not a single event indicated that it ejected volcanic materials other than from the crater," he said.

– Celso Amo, Cet Dematera

* DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR)