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Chile: Volcanic Eruption Information Bulletin No. 1

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On 2 May, 2008 at 02:00 hours the Chaitén volcano started to erupt after being inactive for many years. A red alert was issued in the community of Chaitén in the southern region of Chile, due to the extreme volcanic activity of the Chaitén volcano. Local authorities from Chaitén and Futaleufú have evacuated approximately 8,000 people to other regions. The city of Chaitén has been reported isolated since the main road is blocked by a layer of 15 cm of ash. The communities of El Amarillo and Chana are also performing evacuation activities. The Chilean Red Cross in coordination with government authorities is constantly monitoring the situation.

The Chilean Red Cross has developed a Plan of Action and requested money from the Federation's Disaster Response Emergency Funds to help implement this Plan of Action. More information will follow within the next few days.

The Situation

On 2 May 2008, the Chaitén volcano, located 760 miles south of the Chilean capital Santiago, started to erupt molten rock and ash after being dormant for 173 years, according to the National Service of Geology and Mining, forcing people within a 30 mile radius to be evacuated from their houses. According to the National Emergency Office (Oficina Nacional de Emergencia – ONEMI), some 8,000 people from the affected areas have been evacuated to Puerto Montt and Castro, but there are some people in the areas of Palena and Futaleufú that cannot be evacuated by air due to the ash clouds. The ash clouds are reaching 14 km of altitude.

The most affected communities are the city of Chaitén, Futaleufú, El Amarillo and Chana. Local authorities have interrupted water service in Chaitén as a preventive measure. The rest of utility services are still operating. The Armed Forces have sent a water tank to Chaitén holding 70,000 liters of water to be distributed. Ashes have reached communities in the Andean mountains of Chile and Argentina forcing schools to close. Some 90 percent of the evacuees is currently staying with friends or family; the other 10 percent is housed in temporary shelters. These have been opened in Castro and Puerto Montt.

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