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'Understanding volcanoes and society: the key for risk mitigation'



The volcano hazards program in the Araucania Region: 25 years of success in community and authorities preparedness

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On 1991 the Araucanía region was selected as a “pilot region” to initiate a volcano hazards program because the two most active volcanoes are located in the area: Villarrica and Llaima. At the same time the Southern Andes Volcano Observatory started its building. Through three grants to study the geology and hazards of Llaima and Villarrica volcanoes, systematic studies were done involving the community. In fact, the University of Chile, Sernageomin, University of La Frontera (Temuco), Conaf (National Parks) and Onemi started this program involving local inhabitants and authorities. The five first years were dedicated to study the geology and hazards of both volcanoes, together with authorities meetings involving 6 communes with their Mayors around the volcanoes. Numerous talks, presentations, field trips, small classes with the community, together with the socialization of the hazards maps with the local inhabitants were done. The following 5 years through another grant, two more volcanoes of the Villarrica chain were studied: Quetrupillan and Lanin. At the same time talks, presentations, classes with the community were done to strengthen education and knowledge of volcanoes and their hazards. Even more, workshops with journalists and museum expositions were made to bring people aware of the volcano hazards. The National Parks visitor centers had volcanic rocks collections for people and tourists to learn about them. Since 2000 onwards, using the zoned volcano maps, Emergency Plans were made by some communes under the Onemi supervision. Low hazards areas around Villarrica and Llaima volcanoes were selected for evacuation plans, together with simulacrum.