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



How changes in alert levels of Villarica volcano, affect educational community

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Villarica Volcano (39°25' S; 71°56'W), is a compound stratovolcano, with 2.847 m.a.s.l, which is considered one of the most active of the Southern Andes region, characterized for having an active lava lake on his summit crater in constant oscillation that presents continuous surface activity, with fifty eruptions since 1885, where, the last one was on early morning on March 3rd, 2015. Villarica volcano presents relevant eruptions which have had influence on population who lives on settlements near the volcano and also, float community, for the high permanent rate of tourism per year in this location. Accordingly, when activity increases, there is a reactive effect from people to warning changes determined by appropriate authorities. Particularly, in relation to the academic activities on schools, when the parameters of volcano seismicity are increasing, the agency responsible for volcano monitoring, the Observatorio Volcanológico de Los Andes del Sur, OVDAS (belonging to SERNAGEOMIN) change the alert technical level depending on the activity grade recorded, affecting thus the educational community, who run their protocol, doing emergency drills for prepare teachers and students in case of emergency. Thus, uncertainty and concern generated in the educational community is present. For these cases during class period, it is essential the role played by advance preparation at schools and support by the agencies responsible for public safety (ONEMI (Oficina Nacional de Emergencia del Ministerio del Interior), police, etc.), in order to educate people in these kinds of emergency, prevent disruption and achieve successfully evacuate. From past experiences, the shared knowledge of people concerning the ability of threats that can produce Villarica Volcano when it enters into a critical state, the community pays more attention to possible changes of alert announced one through the media, which are taken from official reports by OVDAS.