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



Engaging youth in raising hazard awareness in the Eastern Caribbean

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Since 2001 The UWI Seismic Research Centre (UWI-SRC), through its Education and Outreach team, has taught persons in the Eastern Caribbean about earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic activity. The outreach team uses informal science education as a tool for risk reduction. The “UWI GeoSeekers” community is the latest method used by the Centre to improve young people’s understanding of volcanic hazard in the region. A key objective of this program is to encourage youth to take a greater personal interest in their own safety. The UWI-SRC’s outreach seeks to create long-term change in public attitudes to living in the Caribbean’s multi-hazard environment by educating young people about these hazards. This includes raising awareness among young people of volcanic hazard, training them in personal safety, and promoting the study of Geo-science. In the past, similar programmes designed for youth were delivered in traditional classroom settings. This new approach is intended to be a more accessible form of preparedness education that can engage a larger number of Eastern Caribbean youth. The “UWI GeoSeekers” community creates a virtual space where Caribbean youth can access geo-science related activities supported by the UWI-SRC as well as share their experiences with regional peers primarily via social media. The concept was piloted during the annual Volcano Awareness Week 2016 held on the island of St. Vincent and initial impressions suggests that it has the potential to contribute to improved volcanic hazard perception within this demographic.