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



Communication of vog hazard and protective actions: a multi-agency approach

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Emissions from Kilauea Volcano, Hawai'i have been nearly continuous since 1983, releasing 300-30,000 tonnes of SO₂/day. Populations downwind are chronically exposed to vog (composed of SO₂ gas and/or sulphate particles). Following a report of a survey on community perceptions of vog exposure, protection and advice on Hawai'i Island (see presentation in Session S1.3), which showed the need for consistent, relevant advice related to vog risk, an interagency partnership was formed between the USGS Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, Hawaii State Department of Health, National Park Service (Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park; HVNP), Hawai'i County Civil Defense, University of Hawai'i, International Volcanic Health Hazard Network, and others. The initial survey showed the need for advice through a range of media, especially as some rural Hawai'i communities are not well-connected to internet/mobile networks and even lack reliable radio access. At the time of the study, most advice was only available online and was inconsistent across the agency websites. The partnership therefore worked to update existing advice (particularly in relation to the health hazards of vog and how to protect oneself) and make it accessible in new ways. Central to the efforts was the development of a new online interagency 'dashboard' (www.ivhhn.org/vog) where comprehensive vog-related information is accessed through a single portal. Accompanying the online presence are printed informational products (a booklet, pamphlet and poster) for distribution to the public (at health clinics/HVNP/public talks etc.) and posting on community bulletin boards. The need for social media communication was also clearly expressed in the survey, so a Facebook group called 'Vog Talk' was set up as a forum for community discussion, and an opportunity for dialogue among the communities and agencies, in order to implement feedback into products. A press release, resulting in traditional media articles (newspaper/television/radio/internet), acted to further promote the products and new interagency partnership.