

## UPDATE ON THE MONTSERRAT VOLCANO – January 12, 2010

### General

Increased activities at the Soufriere Hills volcano in Montserrat since mid December 2009 have caused the Hazard Level to rise to Level Four (4). This is the second highest level and covers over two-thirds of the island (see Fig. 1). On December 24, 2009 ash falls were experienced in the unrestricted access areas to the north of the island.

At 2:49 pm on Friday 8th January 2010 a large pyroclastic flow forming event occurred at Soufriere Hills volcano. A collapsing fountain of tephra, associated with ballistic fragments, was observed at the start of the event on the northeastern side of the volcano (very similar in character to those which occurred in Summer 1997). Large pyroclastic flows moved both to the northeast, reaching the sea down Whites Bottom Ghaut and to within a few hundred metres of the sea down Tuitts Ghaut. Flows also moved to the northwest down Tyers Ghaut, and into the Belham Valley. These flows reached as far as approximately 300 m upstream of the old Belham crossing near Air Studios. Pyroclastic flows also moved to the west towards Plymouth, although it is presently unclear whether they actually reached the sea. Flows also travelled down the Tar River Valley. The event lasted about 11 minutes and seismicity returned to background levels rapidly. There was no precursory seismicity associated with the event. Only ashfall has been reported in inhabited areas on the northwestern side of the volcano (pyroclastic flows at Fig 2).

MVO 18:00 8th January 2010

This was followed by the most recent but small explosion which occurred at 8:27pm on January 10, 2010 at the Soufriere Hills volcano in Montserrat. Seismicity has now returned to background level. There was ash fall-out in some inhabited areas. MVO is continuing to monitor the situation.

MVO 20:27 10th January 2010



Figure 2 - Explosion sends pyroclastic flows down Belham Valley

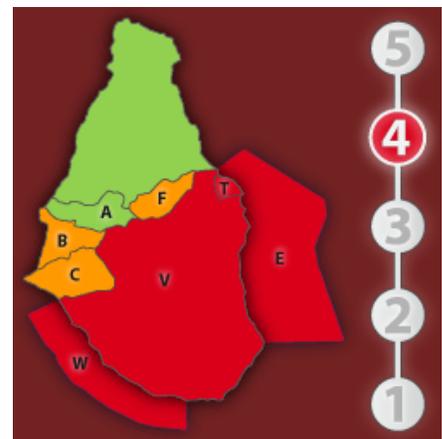


Figure 1 – The current Hazard Level

## National Response

The Disaster Management Coordinating Agency (DMCA) has been keeping the public informed by sending out Press Releases and using the mass media. The Governor of Montserrat issued a Restriction Order (#1 of 2010) on Friday January 8, 2010 to prevent access into the Restricted Zones until further notice.

## Hazard Level System

The Government of Montserrat, the Disaster Management Coordinating Agency (DMCA) and the MVO have adopted a Hazard Level System which has been used at the Soufrière Hills Volcano, Montserrat since August 1, 2008. The purpose of the system is to improve management of the ongoing eruption and to provide important information to the residents of Montserrat.

The Hazard Level System divides the southern two-thirds of Montserrat into **six zones**, with **two Maritime Exclusion Zones**. Access permission for each of these zones is dependent on the Hazard Level. The Hazard Level, which ranges from 1 to 5 is set by the National Disaster Preparedness, Response and Advisory Committee (**NDPRAC**) on the advice of MVO.

## Access Restrictions

| Unrestricted   | Daytime access  | Daytime access to some areas  | Daytime transit  | Controlled access   | Essential workers  |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Ashfall and lahars can be significant hazards in all areas, and require appropriate precautions. | Access is permitted from 6:30 am until 5:30 pm. Access gates will be locked at all other times. | Areas will be defined depending on state and location of the volcanic activity. | Boats permitted to travel through the MEZ without stopping from 6:30 am until 5:30 pm. | No access without approval from NDPRAC. Approval considered on a case-by-case basis. Gates will be locked at all times. | No access apart from MVO and associated staff. Access for essential maintenance only with approval from NDPRAC. Gates will be locked at all times. |

Information courtesy: <http://www.montserratvolcanoobservatory.info>

## Regional Response

The Caribbean Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA) has been in contact with the Disaster Management Coordinating Agency (DMCA) and continues to monitor the situation in Montserrat.

CDEMA'S Twenty-four hour Telephone # is **1 (246) 425 0386**