

COTOPAXI VOLCANO: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

As there is a potential for eruptions of Cotopaxi volcano, the Office of International Programs (OPI) at Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) would like to inform all of our international students and their sending universities/organizations of the following information:

- While we cannot predict when a volcanic eruption will occur or the level of intensity of the eruption if it occurs, the good news is that USFQ is located in Cumbaya about 50 kilometers from the volcano and is considered a safe zone in case of volcanic eruption. This means that if an eruption occurs, lava, lahars or pyroclastic flow will most likely not reach USFQ. However, there is a potential for ash fall.
- Due to the increase of internal and external activity of Cotopaxi, the Ecuadorian government has declared a “Yellow Alert”, which means that all citizens should prepare for a threat of volcanic eruption by identifying safe areas, evacuation routes and meeting points. Authorities should prepare contingency plans and establish shelters. During this period of yellow alert, daily life will not be affected and classes will continue as usual. However, the Office of International Programs recommends that all international students carry the following items in their backpack during this period:
 - Face Mask (N-95 mask recommended for protection from ash fall)
 - Goggles
 - Warm sweater or jacket
 - Cereal bars /snack
 - Bottled Water
 - Cash
 - Any medication taken on a regular basis (a 72 hour supply)
 - Antibacterial gel
 - USFQ ID card

If the Ecuadorian government declares an “Orange Alert”, which means that all citizens should prepare for an imminent threat of volcanic eruption, USFQ’s emergency committee will meet at the University for a quick-analysis of the situation, follow the instructions of government authorities and relay emergency updates to the USFQ committee. During this period of orange alert, daily life will not be affected and classes will continue as usual.

- If Cotopaxi erupts, the Ecuadorian government will declare a “Red Alert”, which means that a volcanic eruption is in process. In case of a change from an orange to a red alert during regular class hours (between 7:00am and 9:00pm), USFQ will stop all activities.
 - Classes will be suspended.
 - USFQ’s parking lots will be closed and cars will not be allowed to leave USFQ (this includes USFQ’s main lots and Paseo San Francisco’s lot). The Ecuadorian government will most likely close highways, so it will be chaotic for drivers and closing the parking lot is a way to prevent accidents.
 - In case the volcanic eruption produces ash fall in Cumbayá, OPI recommends all international students remain indoors in the USFQ and use a face mask. Face masks will be distributed to students if they do not have one.

- In case the volcanic eruption produces an earthquake in Cumbayá, OPI recommends that all international students find a designated outdoor “safe area” at USFQ as quickly as possible. Students should walk quickly but pay attention as they go down stairs, always using the handrails, and not enter any elevator.
- OPI recommends that all international students stay inside of their classrooms if they are in class or go to one of the “safe areas” designated at the university. The safe areas inside USFQ are: Maxwell, Coliseo, Hall Principal and Aristóteles which could be used in case of ash fall. Outdoor safe areas at USFQ are: Canchas (soccer fields), Plaza Da Vinci and Plaza Maxwell.
- Students can leave the university by foot, but it is recommended that they stay and await further instructions from USFQ’s emergency committee and to avoid the outside chaos in the first few hours after the red alert is issued. International students are also encouraged to visit OPI’s office for further assistance.
- The Office of International Programs will ask all international students currently on the Cumbayá campus to bring a box with non-perishable food and drink items to last for 48 hours in case they need to remain on campus or at a shelter for a few hours. The boxes will be stored on campus.



- If international students are not on campus at the time the red alert is issued:
 - They must follow the instructions of government authorities, especially if they are in risk zones. Evacuations must be done in a controlled and calm manner.
 - If international students are close to their homestay families or place of residence, it is recommended to go straight home. If they are close to USFQ, they can seek shelter at USFQ or Colegio Menor, another safe shelter where they can stay for up to 48 hours.
 - USFQ recommends that international students identify the safe areas along their daily route, The official risk and safe areas map can be found at the following link: http://www.quito.gob.ec/documents/mapa_cumbaya_tumbaco_vcotopaxi.pdf

If any international student or international university/organization has a question or concern about Cotopaxi volcano, please visit us at Casa Tomate 105 or send us an email at opi@usfq.edu.ec.