

# Philippine volcano calming; thousands head home

January 2 2010

---



Fireworks light up the sky to welcome the New Year amidst a backdrop of Mayon volcano in its continuing mild eruption as seen from Lignon Hill in Legazpi city, Albay province about 500 kilometers southeast of Manila, Philippines Friday Jan. 1, 2010. About 50,000 residents spent their Christmas and New Year holidays in evacuation centers since the country's most active volcano began spewing ash Dec. 14, 2009. (AP Photo/Mike Alquinto)

(AP) -- Thousands of villagers evacuated from near the Philippines' most active volcano headed home Saturday after scientists said the rumbling mountain was showing signs it was calming down.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology early Saturday lowered a five-stage alert over Mayon volcano from level 4 to 3, saying there was "less probability of a hazardous [explosive eruption](#)."

Most of the 47,000 evacuees whose homes are within a 5-mile (8-kilometer) danger zone have been told it is safe to return home, said Cedric Daep, head of the disaster management office of Albay province, about 212 miles (340 kilometers) southeast of Manila.

Only about 5,000 whose homes are on the southeastern slope of the volcano and in the path of lava flows remained in shelters, he said.

Chief state volcanologist Renato [Solidum](#) said scientists were closely monitoring the volcano and will raise the alert in case of a resurgence of activity.

"At the moment, the activity of the [volcano](#) is declining, but the volcanic unrest is still high," he said.

The institute said in a statement that it noted "a declining trend in Mayon volcano's activity."

It cited the absence of ash ejections over the past four days, weak steam emissions, declining amounts of sulfur dioxide gas - an indicator of rising magma. It also said majority of earthquakes recorded in the past days have been associated with rockfalls, not rising magma.

Albay Gov. Joey Salceda has ordered that all schools be prepared to reopen for classes next week, Jukes Nunez of the provincial disaster office said. Many schools had been retasked as shelters since the evacuations began Dec. 15.

The evacuees heading home also will be given enough food for three days and will continue to receive supplies already set aside for them by the World Food Program, Nunez said.

Daep said the military and police will help transport the villagers back to

their homes.

"We are very very happy we are going home to our village," said 59-year-old seamstress Myrna Avellano. "We had a sad Christmas and New Year's Eve at the evacuation center."

Mayon, known for its perfect cone, has erupted nearly 40 times over 400 years, sending people packing for months at a time. But never has it happened during the all-important Christmas celebration, when Filipinos gather with family and friends for traditional meals and merry-making.

©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Philippine volcano calming; thousands head home (2010, January 2) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-philippine-volcano-calming-thousands-home.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.