

Video game to help islanders understand volcano's power

March 17 2015, by Alan Williams



The inhabitants of a Caribbean island will soon be able to learn more about the volcano which towers over their homes thanks to a video game created at Plymouth University.

La Soufriere, perched on the northern edge of St Vincent, last erupted in 1979 while its most deadly blast was in 1902 when 1,500 people lost their lives.

Now volcanologists in Plymouth have developed a new [educational game](#), which they hope will enable people of all ages to recognise the signs an

eruption may be imminent, and to know what to do if such a situation arises.

Devised by PhD student Lara Mani and Lecturer in Geohazards Dr Paul Cole, the [game](#) has been built by digital arts specialists at i-DAT (the Institute of Digital Arts and Technology based at the University).

Lara, whose PhD is based on the 3D visualisation of volcanic hazards, said:

"There are around 110,000 people living on St Vincent, and about 20,000 would have to evacuate their homes in the event of La Soufriere erupting. But despite having a [volcano](#) hazards map, and a Volcano Awareness Week each year, a whole generation has grown up on the island not having experienced the volcano's potentially destructive power."

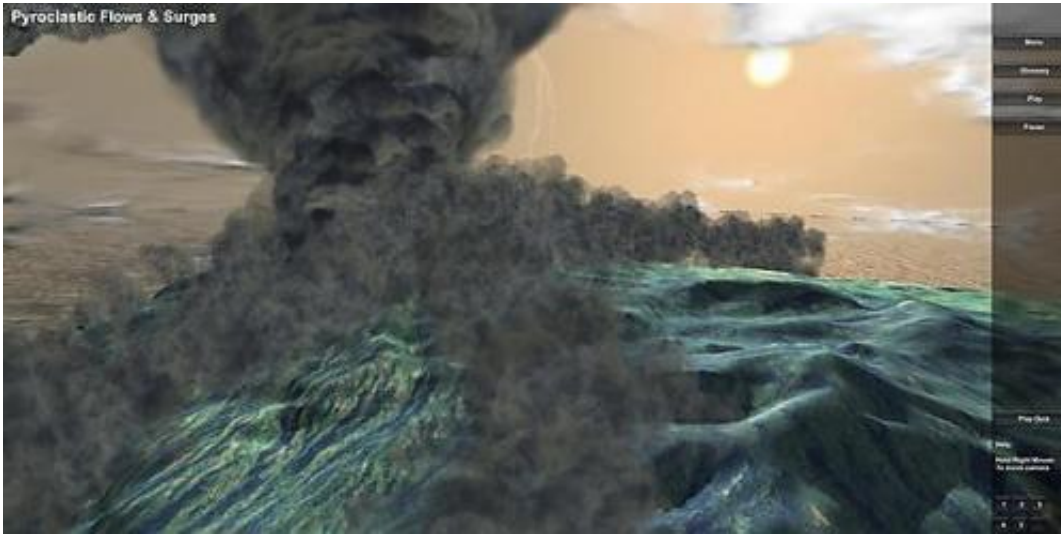
The game begins by providing information about the 1902 and 1979 eruptions, as well as factual details about the volcano itself and then more general information about the different types of eruption that could occur.

There is also detail about how an eruption would affect three towns in the shadow of the volcano – Fancy, Chateaubelair and Georgetown – and a series of quizzes designed to test what players have learned.



The game will be trialled in St Vincent over the coming weeks, with scientists from Plymouth working in conjunction with the University of the West Indies to examine its impact and any adaptations the islanders would suggest.

Once any changes are made, the aim is to roll it out across schools and community facilities during this year, but also to look at ways to spread the message more widely.



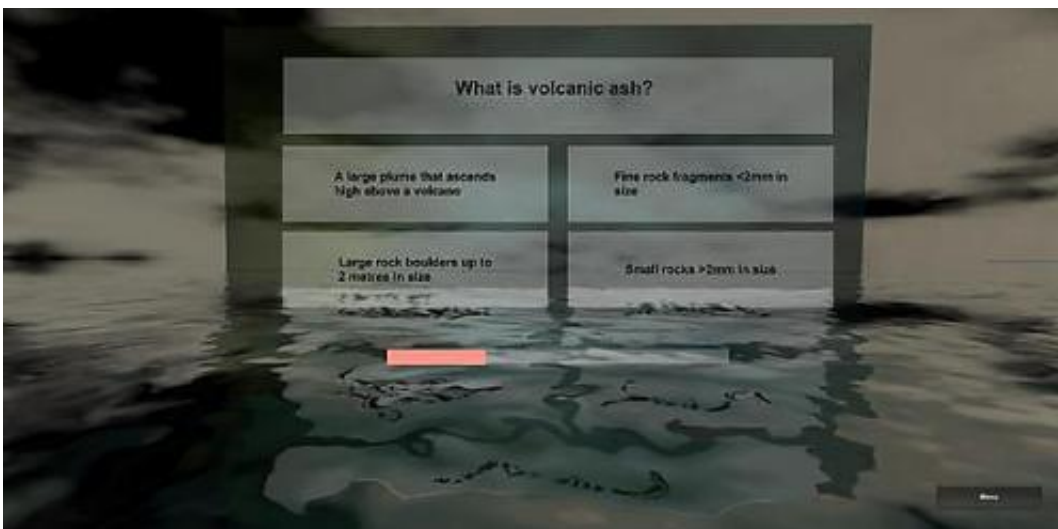
Lara added:

"The children on St Vincent are used to game playing – and there is a programme on the island to enable all schoolchildren to have a laptop – so we felt this was the perfect way to communicate with them. We also hope it could be the start of a wider volcano awareness project, possibly using footage from the game to educate young people in the UK and across the world. Volcanoes are a fascinating but potentially deadly force, and anything which increases awareness of them is a positive thing."

Volcanologists at Plymouth University are part of the collaborative STREVA (Strengthening Resilience in Volcanic Areas) project, which brings together diverse researchers from universities and research institutes from within the UK and from those areas affected directly by volcanic activity.

Its previous projects have included Volcanoes Top Trumps, with an

educational card and online game designed to motivate people to learn more about some of the planet's most destructive natural phenomena.



Provided by University of Plymouth

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