

# Philippines braces for long emergency as volcano erupts

January 24 2018, by Joeal Calupitan

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A flock of turkeys searches for food amidst an erupting Mayon volcano as seen from Legazpi city, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

An erupting Philippine volcano belched red-hot lava and clouds of ash and debris at least four times Wednesday, prompting the number of displaced villagers to swell to more than 74,000 and causing officials to brace for a humanitarian emergency they fear could last for months.

Mount Mayon has been acting up for more than a week, ejecting ash and lava fountains up to 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) from the crater in a picturesque but increasingly dangerous eruption. There have been no reports of injuries and law enforcers have struggled to keep villagers and tourists from sneaking into danger zones.

Pyroclastic flows—superheated gas and [volcanic debris](#) that could incinerate anything in their path—reached 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the crater in one area, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

"It's a logistical nightmare," Office of Civil Defense regional director Claudio Yucot said of the government's effort to look after the still-swelling number of evacuees in at least 66 emergency shelters in nine cities and towns in northeastern Albay province, where Mayon lies.

Based on its previous eruptions, Mayon's restiveness could last from two to four months, prompting Albay and national authorities to take steps to ease the impact on schools, public health and safety, livelihood and law and order, officials said.



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Temporary learning centers will be set up in dozens of schools turned into evacuation centers to allow classes to continue, and [farm animals](#) will be brought to areas closer to their owners in evacuation camps to prevent more losses to villagers' livelihoods, Yucot said.

One town in Albay, Camalig, has already set up an area for rescued farm animals, he said.

Authorities have struggled to prevent villagers from sneaking back to check on their homes and farms, with one official recommending that electricity and water supplies be cut in communities within the no-entry danger zones around Mayon to discourage residents from returning.

Although Mayon has erupted about 50 times in the last 500 years, sometimes violently, it has remained popular among climbers and tourists.



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In 2013, an ash eruption killed five climbers who had ventured near the summit despite warnings. Its most destructive eruption, in 1814, killed more than 1,200 people and buried the town of Cagsawa in volcanic mud. The belfry of Cagsawa's stone church still juts from the ground in an eerie reminder of Mayon's fury.

Scottish tourist Rachel Rae and her son traveled from their home outside Manila to Albay, lured by the dramatic images of Mayon's eruption that appeared in the news.

"This is a great opportunity to come and see something that we have never seen before, probably may not have a chance again to do," Rae said in Cagsawa, where she and her son watched Mayon from a distance.

The Philippines, which has about 22 active volcanoes, lies in the "Ring of Fire," a line of seismic faults surrounding the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes and volcanic activity are common.

In 1991, Mount Pinatubo in the northern Philippines exploded in one of the biggest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, killing hundreds of people, covering entire towns and cities in ash and prompting the U.S. government to abandon its vast air and naval bases on the main northern Luzon island.





Volcanic ash from Mayon volcano's eruption partly blanketed Guinobatan township, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



A resident walks back to his hut as Mayon volcano exhibits a lull in its eruption as seen from Legazpi city, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



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Pyroclastic materials cascade down the slopes of Mayon volcano during another eruption as seen from Legazpi city, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



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Residents watch as Mayon volcano erupts anew as seen from Legazpi city, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)





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An enterprising resident offers to wash for a fee windshields of passing vehicles as Mayon volcano sporadically erupts as seen from Legazpi city, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



Motorists use face masks as volcanic ash from Mayon volcano's eruption partly blanketed Guinobatan township, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)





Volcanic ash from Mayon volcano's eruption is seen along a highway in Guinobatan township, Albay province, around 340 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018. Lava fountaining regularly from the Philippines' most active volcano has flowed up to 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the crater in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption. Mount Mayon has spewed lava up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) high at times Tuesday and early Wednesday and its ash plumes stretched up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) above the crater. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

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Citation: Philippines braces for long emergency as volcano erupts (2018, January 24) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-01-philippines-braces-emergency-volcano-erupts.html>

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