



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, November 19, 2014
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Witnesses Agree on the Importance of Volcano Hazard Preparedness & Response

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing on *“Volcano Hazards: Exploring the National Preparation and Response Strategy.”* This hearing examined the current state of volcanic hazards in the United States and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Volcano Hazards Program that is designed to address these hazards, alert communities to pending eruptions, and mitigate devastating impacts to communities.

“This hearing is particularly timely as all American’s have been watching the devastation of a slow moving lava flow on the Hawaiian community of Pahoa. This particular flow began in June and has damaged roads, partially covered a cemetery and burned down two structures,” **said Subcommittee Chairman Doug Lamborn.** *“USGS monitors and assesses the Nation’s volcanic hazards and works with other countries to do the same. However, while USGS administers this burden, this is a program that has for too long gone unauthorized by Congress. As has been stated before, as the authorizing Committee in Congress the oversight we hold here today will help us understand and review the programs operating at USGS and clarify what steps can be taken to improve the operations through formal Congressional Authorization in the future.”*

Witnesses at the hearing gave an overview of the current volcanic hazards in the United States and highlighted the need for robust volcano hazard monitoring and preparedness in order to mitigate the potential devastating effects of volcano eruption activity.

[Dr. Charles Mandeville](#) is the Volcano Hazards Program Coordinator at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at the Department of the Interior. According to the USGS, *“the United States is one of the most volcanically active nations in the world”* and there are *“169 potentially active volcanoes in the United States.”* Mandeville underscored the importance of volcano hazard preparedness that enables *“the public to move themselves and their property out of harm’s way before the eruption occurs. Emergency managers, critical infrastructure operators, the military, and the general public can plan actions to mitigate the effects of volcanic ash or lahars (volcanic mudflows) once an eruption begins.”*

[Thomas A. Drean](#) is the State Geologist and Director of the Wyoming State Geological Survey. If Wyoming was an independent nation, it would be the 10th largest energy

producer in the world and 3rd largest exporter of energy in the world. Since the production of energy and natural resources is vital to Wyoming, *“an interruption of it due to significant geological hazard event such as a major volcanic eruption would have substantial impact on humans and the economy.”* Even though there is less than a 1 percent chance that a very large explosive event will take place in this century like the large explosive eruptions that occurred in Yellowstone over 70,000 years ago, Dean stated that *“providing ample warning of a potential volcanic event in Yellowstone is of paramount importance for local, regional and national awareness and preparedness.”*

[Dr. Shanaka de Silva](#) is a Professor of Geology and Geophysics at Oregon State University’s College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences. De Silva called volcano monitoring infrastructure “critical” to monitoring activity beneath the ground and underscored the importance of installing seismic networks and other sensors many years before any volcanic unrest begins. By having this infrastructure in place, there is a benchmark to measure new volcanic activity and detect potential new volcanic hazards that are real threats to the economy, infrastructure, and the people of the United States.

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