

Mount Rainier Named A "Decade Volcano"

A science plan for organizing the research needed to evaluate the hazards associated with Mount Rainier and for developing ways to communicate this risk assessment as a basis for appropriate planning is the goal of an introductory workshop held Sept. 18-20 at the University of Washington. The workshop was organized under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences' U.S. Geodynamics Committee in cooperation with the Academy's Board on Natural Disasters, and was co-hosted by the USGS and UWA. The University hopes to establish an interdisciplinary Volcano Studies Center.

Mount Rainier, the highest (4392m) volcano in the Cascade Range, towers over a human population of more than 2.5 million in the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area. Its drainage system via the Columbia River potentially impacts another half million residents of southwestern Washington and northwestern Oregon. In terms of its potential for magma-water interaction and sector collapse and for major eruptions – or debris flows even without eruption, Rainier is the most hazardous volcano in the Cascades. Although it poses significant dangers and economic threats to the region, it has received little study.

In 1989 the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI) established a Task Group for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The Task Group conceived the idea of selecting several volcanoes for focused study in the next decade as "Decade Volcano Demonstration Projects." established criteria for a "Decade Volcano," and solicited nominations. The IAVCEI accepted nominations of 7 volcanoes in developing countries and 2 in the U.S. – Mount Rainier and Mauna Loa.

Workshop organizers hope to publish the science plan by early 1993. For additional information contact Barbara Samora, Resource Management Specialist, Mount Rainier NP, Tahoma Woods, Star Route, Ashford, WA 98304-9751; (206) 569-2211.