

1985 Deadly Lahar Of The Nevado Del Ruiz Volcano

On November 13 1985, an eruption of the Ruiz Volcano, Colombia melted ice atop which mixed with volcanic debris turning into a lahar flow. The 40m deep lahar raced down the Languillas river valley engulfing everything in the path and depositing in the town of Armero.

How It occurred

A minor eruption of the nearby Ruiz volcano melted ice into water which mixed with volcanic debris of prior eruptions turning into mud (lahar). The event occurred around 9 in the evening where most people were asleep.

Effects



Armero lahar, source <http://volcanoes.usgs.gov>

Because many were asleep and warning measures were not properly undertaken, the death toll was a combined 25 000 making it the 2nd largest volcanic disaster in the 20th century and one of the deadliest lahar flow.

In addition, the volcano had been dormant for 140 years making people ignore it as a threat.

The government was mostly The effects were mainly the lahar flow rather than the volcano itself (like ash, cinders, bombs lava flows etc). The volcano was responsible for melting ice which subsequently triggered the lahar.

- 5 000 injured
- 5 000 homes destroyed
- 11 000ha of Agriculture land was disrupted
- Natural ecosystems including trees and rivers were destroyed
- Crop harvests destroyed
- Hospitals destroyed
- Some survivors faced traumas, anxiety and nightmares after the eruption
- A staggering \$6 billion in total costs.

Response

The deep lahar made transportation, hence rescue efforts, difficult making aerial rescues the best alternative. Many injured survivors died due to late treatment.

Local hospitals were insufficient for all the victims, thus some were sent to hospitals in Ibagué.

- \$2 million donated by the US government.
- \$1.25 million from Japan
- Several financial donations from France, Iceland
- Rescue workers deployed in search of survivors (though the lahar hindered the rescue)
- Tents, blankets, food & medicinal facilities supplied by the US, France, Ecuador and other countries.
- Doctors, nurses, physicists from countries such as Japan, US & France

The vicinity of the Ruiz volcano remains hazardous and prone to deadly mass movements such as the one in 1985.