

Eruption Notice –information urging people to take swift and appropriate protective action

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JMA monitors volcanic phenomena of all the 110 active volcanoes in Japan, evaluates the status of the volcanoes, and issues Volcanic Warnings for them to mitigate the effects of volcanic disasters. When life-threatening phenomena (such as ballistic projectiles and pyroclastic flows) and/or extension of the affected area by the phenomena are expected, JMA issues the Warnings together with target areas where action for disaster mitigation is needed. For volcanoes where Volcanic Alert Levels are in effect, JMA issues Warnings with Alert Levels that are in line with disaster mitigation actions pre-agreed at the relevant local Volcanic Disaster Management Council. Once issued, the Warnings are immediately transmitted to the residents through municipalities concerned as well as mass media. Disaster management organs in the municipalities then take necessary actions such as setting restricted areas and/or evacuation orders.

At the eruption of Ontakesan (Mt. Ontake) on 27 September 2014, JMA issued the first observation report 8 minutes after the eruption. JMA then investigated the eruption details including target areas and issued the first Volcanic Warning 44 minutes after the eruption. However, the eruption killed many climbers around the crater. Study Group on the Provision of Volcano Information under the Coordinating Committee for Prediction of Volcanic Eruption recommended JMA to establish new information which notifies people entering volcanic areas of an eruption immediately in an easy-to-understand manner so that they can take swift protective action. JMA launched the Eruption Notice system on August 2015.

Eruption Notices are issued right after a volcanic eruption is detected. The Notices report only the occurrence of an eruption before evaluating its magnitude to urge climbers and residents around the volcano to take swift protective action. Eruption Notices are issued for volcanoes with continuous monitoring when eruptions occur after a period of inactivity or those on an unprecedented scale. Even when plumes are not identified in visual observations due to bad weather, JMA issues a Notice with supplementary statement “eruptions are thought to have occurred” if an eruption is presumed from seismometer and/or low-frequency microphone data.

Eruption Notices are provided via TV, radio and mobile phones as well as JMA website. As of January 2016, information providing services using mobile apps and e-mails are available from the following three companies: Yahoo! JAPAN, Japan Meteorological Cooperation and WEATHERNEWS INC.

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