

Mitigation of volcanic hazard in Sakurajima, Japan, through the coordinating committee and through communication with the public

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The Sakurajima Volcanological Observatory, at present the Sakurajima Volcano Research Center (SVRC), was founded in 1960 as a part of the Disaster Prevention Research Institute, Kyoto University, following the request from local governments and residents of the volcanic area. The SVRC contributes to society by releasing scientific results and knowledge on volcanic hazard to the public, as well as by advising national and local governments on hazard mitigation strategies. Volcano experts are required to issue a warning when a volcanic eruption is ongoing or imminent. The SVRC evaluates volcanic activity using observational data. It communicates and interacts often with local government offices, such as the ones in Kagoshima Prefecture, Kagoshima City, Tarumizu City, local branches of ministries of the national government, the Osumi Office of Rivers and National Highways (OORNH), and the Kagoshima Local Meteorological Office (KLMO). The SVRC and these offices work in close cooperation. For example, the meeting of the Coordinating Committee for Hazard Mitigation of Sakurajima Volcano has been taking place regularly every two months since 2006. The purpose of the Coordinating Committee is to share up-to-date observational results, to cooperate and to examine special topics to respond in terms of hazard mitigation in case of volcanic eruptions of the Sakurajima. The KLMO provides information on the volcanic activity of the Sakurajima as necessary, on the basis of the continuous observation and monitoring conducted in cooperation with the SVRC, OORNH, and other relevant bodies.

The Kyoto University has research facilities located across Japan, and organizes open-doors weeks at these facilities, i.e. the “KYODAI Weeks”, every year in October and November. As a part of this event, the SVRC opens not only the observatory, but also an underground observation tunnel to the public, so that the visitors can understand the instrumentation employed to monitor volcanic phenomena. We installed a group of PC displays at the Sakurajima Visitor Center in March 2017 to show real-time seismic and ground deformation data to the general public visiting Sakurajima. In addition, we explained to “volcano guides” how to interpret these monitoring data, so that they can explain these data from the point of view of volcanology to the general public in a straightforward manner.

Keywords: Volcano Hazard, Coordinating Committee, Monitoring Data Display, Doors Open