

Kelman, I. 2006. "Volcano-safer Schools". Cities and Volcanoes Commission Newsletter, December 2006, p. 1.

Full Text:

The previous newsletter (April 2006) noted that delegates at "Cities on Volcanoes 4" were fortunate not only to see school-related products at the "Outreach Exchange" but also to visit a school near Quito which has recognized the volcano-related threats it faces. Significant strides have been made towards educating the students about volcanoes, volcano threats, and volcano safety, particularly regarding their school's location.

The students take this knowledge home and spread the message to their parents, extended family, and neighbours. Such risk education and awareness should be emulated. Yet this same school had design elements which, from a fire safety perspective, might need to be reconsidered. Focusing on one peril at the expense of others does not necessarily improve safety.

To tackle comprehensive school safety, the Coalition for Global School Safety (COGSS) <http://www.interragate.info/coggs> was founded. COGSS was launched in April 2006 by collaborating with the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute and Risk RED, a risk education NGO, to produce a freely-available slide show with more than 200 slides highlighting disaster impacts on schoolchildren, near-disasters, safety initiatives, and advocacy guidance. See the website to become involved and to provide volcano-related ideas.

Another example linking volcanoes and school safety is Bridge for Kids <http://www.bridge4kids.com> in Orting, Washington, USA. Residents became concerned that schools did not have appropriate pedestrian evacuation routes in case of lahars from Mount Rainier, so they are creating such routes. Meanwhile, in volcano-studded New Zealand, the government has published documents on emergency procedures for schools and for early childhood services.

Academia, government, the private sector, international organisations, and non-governmental groups are contributing to the topic. Through any sector, volcanologists, emergency managers, educators, and others can assist in making schools and students safer from volcanoes. Children are our future and schools should be places for a safe education

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