

VOLCANIC ERUPTION, ICELAND APRIL 2010.

As many of us are aware there has been a volcanic eruption in Iceland. The volcano is known as Eyjafjallajokull and is in southern Iceland. The volcano is 1660m high and is covered by an icecap. The volcano first began to erupt on 20th March on the NE side which is ice free. The next eruptive phase began on 14th April and appears to be centred in a 2.5 km wide caldera near the summit. This part of the volcano is under the icecap and researchers from University of Iceland have estimated that there is approx. 1 km³ of ice here and that up to 25% was melted in the first two days. The volcanic plume of ash has risen to a height of 10 km and has spread over most of northern Europe.

In Iceland, emergency evacuations have all gone according to plans. Most people have now been able to return to their homes. The flood barriers have held back the melt water from homes but, Highway One, Iceland's national route which encircles the island has been damaged. A 400m section has been washed away. The area, for those familiar with Iceland, is east of Markarfljot bridge and parts of the road east of Seljalandsa River are gone. Highway One from Thvera to Thorvaldseyri is closed.

The volcanic ash particles are both very fine and coarse and the fluorine content is high. This represents a significant health risk to livestock where the ash is lying on the ground. Adults and children with respiratory problems are advised to stay indoors. Those who venture outside are advised to have goggles and a facemask.

With air traffic now quite disrupted we should recall that the last eruption here in Eyjafjallajokull was in 1821. It began just before Christmas and continued for more than a year until after New Year in 1823. There was a very significant out flow of ash during this period. There is now some concern that Katla may be disturbed as there are known eruption channels between the two volcanoes. Katla is the real concern in this story, the maximum flow from glacial bursts are expected to be 50 to 100 times bigger than Eyjafjallajokull and would have far more serious consequences.

Air traffic advisers are using this link amongst others to get a view on the spread of the ash cloud:
http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/aviation/vaac/vaacuk_vag.html

Try this link for more information:

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/2010/volcano.html>

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