

VESUVIUS 2000
TOWARD SECURITY AND PROSPERITY UNDER THE SHADOW OF VESUVIUS

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Over three million people surround Vesuvius in the Bay of Naples and anxiously wait for the next eruption. According to computer simulations this eruption will be subplinian or plinian and will occur with a high probability during this century. This requires preparing the people and territory on time so that the effects of the eruption will produce minimum socio-economic and cultural losses. This cannot be achieved by unreliable evacuation plans, but by the decisive prevention measures that produce a sense of security and prosperity for the people surrounding the volcano.

Faced with the prospect of an unimaginable human catastrophe, an interdisciplinary group of scientists proposed in 1994 the VESUVIUS 2000 project with the objective of producing guidelines for relocating people and productive resources away from the most dangerous areas surrounding the volcano. VESUVIUS 2000 requires that the people around Vesuvius become more conscious of their environment and that they participate in the solution of their problem. This can be achieved: (1) by developing a set of scientific guidelines based on multidisciplinary inputs from experts and people of the area, and (2) by supporting the necessary projects that transform these guidelines into concrete interventions on the territory. In this manner the entire region surrounding Vesuvius could be economically revitalized and a much better and secure environment produced for the people without destroying their traditions, livelihoods, and aspirations. Central to this project is a Global Volcanic Simulator that simulates possible eruption scenarios and serves as a tool to determine the safe distances from the volcano where both the people and their livelihoods should be located.

The realization of VESUVIUS 2000 objectives requires that the local institutions, territorial administrators, and people work together toward a common goal aimed at replacing the emergency culture with a security culture. In spite of a lack of support for the project, on both the national and European Union levels, VESUVIUS 2000 has been embraced by many schools on the territory and recently some of its objectives have been adopted by Regione Campania in an effort to “save” an unreliable and politicized evacuation plan. Each second, hundreds of kilograms of magma enter into the volcanic system of Vesuvius and unless we begin working together toward a common goal it will be Vesuvius which will once again reclaim the territory from the children of the wordly paradise in the Bay of Naples.