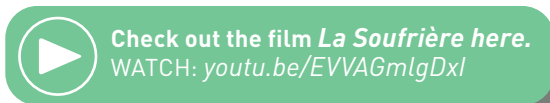


Should I stay or should I go?

Evacuating an area in the face of an impending natural disaster is not as easy as simply telling everyone to leave and seek safety. While it may seem to be common sense, there are a lot of other factors – ranging from the logistical to the emotional – that must be taken into consideration when deciding to order an evacuation. In this activity, we are going to take a look at the official response to the looming eruption of Mount St. Helens, the factors and interests that may have influenced their decisions, and then compare it to similar responses in other situations. We will also look at stories of individuals who decided to stay put – despite the warning and potentially fatal consequences.

In his 1976 film *La Soufrière*, about the impending eruption of the volcano of the same name on the French territory of Guadeloupe, German director Werner Herzog documents the island of Basse-Terre after the official evacuation orders had turned the island into a ghost town. Of particular interest in the film is not the volcano itself – whose eruption ended up being a false alarm – but rather, the poor and homeless townspeople who either refused to evacuate, or wanted to leave, but didn't have the means to.



The evacuation was **widely criticized** (see Chenet report below) – both before and after the fact – for being hastily organized and not adequately prepared for. This, despite the fact that La Soufrière is very much an active volcano that has erupted in recent memory and is certain to do so again at any time. *Does this sound familiar?*



Check out the report here.
WEBSITE: bit.ly/36iJ0lf

Chenet, Marie, et al. “Main Issues of an Evacuation in Case of Volcanic Crisis: Social Stakes in Guadeloupe.” *ResearchGate*, Université de Paris, 20 Apr. 2014,

New reports have levelled many of the **same criticisms at Washington state government officials** (see Worrall article below) who, according to *National Geographic*, “had plenty of time to ensure that everyone was safely evacuated from the area around Mount St. Helens.”



Check out the article here.
WEBSITE: on.natgeo.com/36j0Yxi

Worrall, Simon. “Mistakes Led to Needless Deaths From Worst Volcanic Blast.” *National Geographic*, National Geographic Society, 21 Mar. 2016,



After watching the video (it is long – so you don't have to watch the whole thing!) and reading the two articles, **consider the following questions:**

- What reasons would lead a person to decide NOT to evacuate in the face of a major disaster, such as a volcanic eruption?
- What are some considerations that must be taken into consideration when deciding to order an evacuation?
- Was the response to Mount St. Helens adequate? What are some of the criticisms of the evacuation and do you agree or disagree?
- Based on what you've read and learned about the Mount St. Helens eruption, what most surprised you?



Compare and contrast the evacuation of the area surrounding Mount St. Helens in 1980 and that of Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe just a year prior. Identify at least **three factors that were similar** in each case and **three factors that were different**.



You will submit your report as a **four to five paragraph essay:**

1. The first **three paragraphs** of the report (at least **five to seven sentences each**) should compare and contrast the Basse-Terre and Mount St. Helens evacuations, using the six factors you already identified.
2. In the **fourth paragraph**, briefly outline what an evacuation of your community would look like. Who would be in charge of operations and how would people evacuate with the least amount of chaos?
3. In the **fifth paragraph**, what preparations did you see on your travel program for either withstanding natural disaster or evacuating in the face of one?