



Seismological Society of America

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For Immediate Release

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Hugo Yepes to be honored by Seismological Society of America;

Researcher has improved earthquake and volcanic mitigation efforts, improved information sharing in South America

San Francisco, April 4, 2011 — The Seismological Society of America will award the Frank Press Public Service Award to Ecuadorian seismologist Hugo Yepes at its annual meeting, held April 13-15 in Memphis, Tennessee. Yepes' work throughout his career advanced hazard assessment and risk mitigation efforts in Ecuador and South America.

For more than 20 years, Hugo Yepes has dedicated his life to furthering geological hazard assessment and risk mitigation in Ecuador related to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. By managing the national networks for seismic, volcanic and geodetic observation, embracing open data sharing with other South American networks in one of the world's most geologically active regions, and spending substantial amounts of his time talking to authorities and the media, Yepes' work has been critical to translating science for the public good.

Yepes, director of the Instituto Geofísico at the National Polytechnic School in Quito, Ecuador, is responsible for the seismic hazard assessment in Ecuador and is the scientific advisor on the management of the active volcanoes, including Guagua Pichincha, which sits directly over Quito, Cotopaxi and Tungurahua, located within the Interandean Valley south of Quito. The three volcanoes are active and put large populations at risk. Yepes' is the leader of the rapid response teams and rapid assessment teams for seismic events and volcanic eruptions. He has dedicated his career to mitigation activities, including updating instrumentation for observation to understand the behavior of different volcanoes and seismic zones. He is also a public spokesperson, responsible for providing accurate information and education to the government and Ecuador's 14.5 million people.

Ecuador sits along a major subduction zone with a history of large underthrusting earthquakes that have produced tsunamis and damaging crustal earthquakes in the



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overriding plate. Given the timing of past events, there is concern that specific segments of the subduction or crustal faults, including Quito's own one, are likely candidates for events in the near future. Yepes' work has already shown how mitigation efforts can save lives. A group working under his direction applied its expertise to give advance warning of the eruption of Tungurahua and pyroclastic flows detection and warning at the western slopes of the volcano, including the touristic town of Baños, saving hundreds – if not thousands -- of lives due to an early evacuation carried out because of his assessment.

He has been key to ensuring information is shared with other mitigation groups in South America. Since 1991, Yepes has served as Ecuador's representative on CERSIS (Regional Center for Seismology in South America), which works to share information about geological hazards across the continent. He continues to press for better observation of seismological and volcanic phenomenon in Ecuador. Yepes' leadership allowed more than 50 broadband stations to be installed in this small country and an additional similar and growing number of GPSs and accelerometers, despite limited available resources.

A native of Ecuador, Yepes earned a Master's degree in Professional Geophysics with an emphasis in Seismology from St. Louis University in 1986.

SSA is a scientific society devoted to the advancement of earthquake science. Founded in 1906 in San Francisco, the Society now has members throughout the world representing a variety of technical interests: seismologists and other geophysicists, geologists, engineers, insurers, and policy-makers in preparedness and safety.

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