LATEST ON POTENTIAL IMPACT TO EUROPEAN FLIGHTS FOLLOWING ICELANDIC VOLCANO ERUPTION

News / Airlines



As a volcanic eruption occurs in Iceland near Grindavík, AccuWeather meteorologists are monitoring the situation closely and say there can be impacts to aviation if a cloud of volcanic ash is lofted into the atmosphere. Based on preliminary reports from Iceland, no such cloud has yet been observed, but the situation is continuing to evolve. Should the ongoing eruptions result in a volcanic ash cloud, AccuWeather meteorologists have closely reviewed the winds at various levels of the atmosphere to provide insights on where any lofted ash may be directed:

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- Winds in the lower to middle part of the atmosphere could direct any ash, well above the ground, to the corridor from Northern Germany, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland and Belarus northeastward to Russia Wednesday into Friday.
- Over the next several days, any ash is expected to remain many thousands of feet above the ground but if any concentration of ash persisted into next week, wind currents in the atmosphere could direct the volcanic ash closer to the ground, perhaps in northern Russia.

AccuWeather Chief Meteorologist Jon Porter, commented “Although it does not appear that this volcano, given preliminary information, is likely to have a major impact on air travel as of now, any volcanic ash cloud sent into the atmosphere can cause portions of air space to be reconfigured or even closed, resulting in flight cancellations or delays. If little to no volcanic ash is lofted into the atmosphere, there may be no impact to aviation, which would certainly be a gift to holiday travelers. People who are traveling to and from Europe over the coming days, especially around the busy Christmas holiday, should monitor ongoing developments related to the Iceland volcano closely.”

AccuWeather meteorologists continue to stress that this eruption appears far different in location and characteristics from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in 2010. As a result, the eruption of the current volcano near Grindavík is not expected to produce the severe impact to air travel seen at that time. That volcano produced a large plume of volcanic ash lofted high into the atmosphere, dispersing over a significant part of the of the European continent and causing travel chaos for weeks on end.

In addition to the safety and property damage risks that can come with molten lava emanating from the volcano, AccuWeather experts also highlight the risk for poor air quality near the eruption site. Porter said, “Where magma is near the ground or flowing over the ground, increased sulfur dioxide content can lead to unhealthy, poor air quality.”

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