

## Daily Column

If you thought Iceland's infamous 2010 eruption was bad – when ash from Eyjafjallajökull closed European airspace for days – just imagine what might happen if a much larger volcano went off. Imagine, for instance, volcanic haze rolling across Europe and killing more than 140,000 people.

This scenario, recently proposed by scientists at Leeds University and elsewhere, is a very real possibility. They modeled the atmospheric dispersion of gases from Laki, an Icelandic fissure system that has devastated Europe before. In 1783, its eight-month-long eruption killed more than one-fifth of Icelanders and thousands more across Europe.

Laki is one of history's great untold natural disasters. The particles it spewed cooled the planet for years, altering weather patterns around the globe and likely triggering drought and famine. Shivering in Paris in the cold of 1784, Benjamin Franklin proposed the then-radical idea that particles spewed from a volcanic eruption might affect global climate.

My husband, Jeff Kanipe, and I are science writers who have become fascinated by Laki's tale. We are working on a popular science book for Profile Books of London, and I'm grateful to have received an inaugural EGU Geosciences Communications Fellowship to help with the reporting. We'll be spending two weeks in Iceland in June, in part to attend a Chapman conference on volcanism and the atmosphere, practically in the "fire districts" of Iceland devastated by Laki in 1783. We look forward to telling the story of this forgotten apocalypse.

**Alexandra Witze**  
Science News Contributing Editor

*(This column reflects the personal opinion of its author, not necessarily EGU's.)*



Tuesday, 24 April 2012

## A Thank You message from the EGU President

I want today to pay tribute to four selfless individuals of the EGU executive, who have all been tireless advocates of the European Geosciences Union. Two have just concluded their terms of office for the Union: Tuija Pulkkinen and Hans Thybo, and two are about to begin: Mioara Manda and Günther Blöschl.

Sometimes in life one is lucky, despite one's self. I have had the tremendous good fortune to follow Tuija in the role of EGU President. I have also had the deep pleasure of working with Hans who has always acted as the advocate of the membership. It would be no exaggeration to say that the groundwork Tuija has laid during her tenure carries the Union substantially today, and permeates the constructive atmosphere of the workings of the Council and its committees. Hans has been a steady hand at the wheel of Council proceedings and has always spoken up for those not in the room during Council deliberations. Thank you Tuija! Thank you Hans!

In late 2011 we received the happy news that a great electoral process brought us three candidates to choose from for my successor as president. Günther Blöschl now takes up the reins as vice-president / president-elect, and Mioara Manda follows Hans as general secretary. These two positions will grow substantially in importance during the second year of my presidency. I could not have asked for better people in them. Thank you Günther! Thank you Mioara!

**Don Dingwell** (EGU President)



## Research on flood resilience and Europe

This session is devoted to flood resilience research developed in Europe, particularly within European projects. We will discuss the motivation behind this research, the main objectives of the projects together with the current achievements. The session aims to share experiences, connect and reflect on perceptions related to flood resilience aspects.

**EG4, room D, 08:30–12:00**

## Large earthquake and tsunami activity

The focus of this session is on studies of large historical and instrumental earthquake and tsunami activity. Particular interest is paid to damaging earthquakes and tsunamis, such as the 1693 Sicily (Italy), 1868 Arica (Peru, now Chile), 1755 Lisbon (Portugal), 1960 Valdivia-Puerto Montt (Chile), 2004 Sumatra-Andaman Islands, 2010 Maule (Chile), and 2011 Tohoku (Japan).

**SM2.1/GD1.3/NH4.9/TS8.5, room 26, 08:30–12:00**

## Subduction processes: geochemical inputs and outputs

This session aims to evaluate the geochemical budgets of subduction zones, particularly the transfer of fluids, melts, and geochemical components from slab to mantle wedge and thence to the island arc or convergent margin. The event is co-sponsored by the European Association of Geochemistry (EAG) and includes the AGU Kuno Lecture.

**GMPV1.2/GD5.3/TS6.6, room 20, 10:30–12:00**

## Meet EGU

This session is your opportunity to put a face to the name and meet those behind EGU activities. All meetings take place at the EGU Booth.

- Division President of Geomorphology – Andreas Lang (EGU7), 11:15–12:00
- Division President of Cryospheric Sciences – Hilmar Gudmundsson (EGU18), 12:00–12:45



## EGU Medal Ceremony

This year's EGU medalists and awardees will be honoured at the EGU Medal Ceremony (US1) taking place today from **17:30–20:00 in room D.**

# GeoCinema Highlights

Room: GeoCinema



CC-WaterS  
10:30–10:55



A man of science – the to-  
mography of Earth  
12:15–13:00



Congo river: artery of the forest  
13:15–13:25



The Polar Project: science in Siberia  
13:35–13:50



Hot spots in the cold deep, HERMIONE  
14:20–14:30



In search of Tricho webisodes  
15:00–15:25



Ice crystals, a scientific itin-  
eray into waterfall ice  
16:10–16:25



Dead Sea – research drill-  
ing in the Holy Land  
16:40–16:50



Dir! The movie  
17:15–18:45

## Today's Medal Lectures

- Hans Oeschger Medal Lecture by Michael Mann (ML7), room 15, 10:30–11:30
- Arthur Holmes Medal Lecture by Vincent Courtillot (ML2), room D, 12:15–13:15
- Lewis Fry Richardson Medal Lecture by Harry L. Swinney (ML19), room 18, 13:30–14:30
- Plinius Medal Lecture by Timothy Sullivan (ML18), 15:30–16:30

## EGU2012 Mobile App

To download it, scan the QR code or go directly to <http://app.egu2012.eu> on your mobile device.



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## Reconstructing the climate of the last two millennia

This session aims to highlight new research seeking to improve our understanding of past climate variations covering the past 2000 years at regional to continental scale. It includes the Hans Oeschger Medal Lecture by Prof. Michael E. Mann.

CL1.17/EG1, room 15, 08:30–12:00 & 13:30–15:00



## Press conferences

EGU press conferences are taking place Tuesday–Thursday in the press centre (yellow level – first floor). For more information, and the schedule, check the General Assembly media portal at [media.egu2012.eu](http://media.egu2012.eu).

## State of the cryosphere: observations and modelling

This session aims to present the latest results of changes in the cryosphere from satellite and terrestrial observations to modelling studies investigating the origin and explanation for these changes.

CR1.40/CL2.11, room 5, 08:30–12:00



## Joint IODP–ICDP Townhall Meeting

This Townhall meeting is the opportunity to share our views on exciting challenges to take up for a better understanding of the Earth system and its changing environment. It focuses on two major and complementary international programmes to undertake drilling for the scientific community: IODP (Integrated Ocean Drilling Program) and ICDP (International Continental Scientific Drilling Program), in oceanic and continental environments respectively.

TM4, room 5, 19:00–20:00

## Climate and infectious disease interactions

This session focuses on the interactions between climate and infectious-disease incidence from monthly/seasonal to multi-decadal timescales. Contributions will examine how climate anomalies and extremes influence the distribution of infectious disease, both in tropical and extra-tropical regions.

CL2.5, room 13, 15:30–17:00

## Rockfalls, rockslides and rock avalanches

This session aims to bring together state-of-the-art methods for predicting, assessing, quantifying or protecting against rockfall-, rockslide- and rock avalanche hazards, and to identify future research needs.

NH3.3/GM6.3, room 4, 08:30–12:00

## Mars science and exploration

The 'Mars science and exploration' session addresses the latest results on the interior, surface, atmosphere and ionosphere of Mars from recent and ongoing Mars missions, such as Mars Global Surveyor, Mars Express, Mars Odyssey, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, MERs, and Phoenix, as well as the future exploration of the Red Planet.

PS2.4, room 18, 08:30–12:00 & room 27, 13:30–15:30

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