

# Zain Africa Challenge 2010 – Ask Mwalimu

## Episode 7, Show 16 – Icelandic Volcanic Ash

Today's "Ask Mwalimu will try to answer Maria's question "How and why did the eruption of a volcano in Iceland cause global chaos?"

Before we talk about the chaos, some may wonder how a country as cold as Iceland could even have volcanoes in the first place. Well, volcanoes come from very deep in the Earth and the weather at the surface has no effect on where they are found.

Earlier this year, one of Iceland's volcanoes erupted, throwing thousands of tonnes of mineral ash into the air each day. Most of this ash was fine particles of rock that rose like smoke, as high as 10 kilometres into the atmosphere.

The volcanic cloud spread out across much of Europe, causing many flights to be cancelled. Unlike normal clouds, volcanic ash clouds are dangerous to aircraft since the fine particles can cause engine failure.

Flight disruptions caused hundreds of thousands of travellers to be stranded, and airlines experienced losses amounting to millions of dollars.

The transportation of goods and services also suffered. In Africa, many countries which export fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers to Europe incurred huge losses.

Eventually, test flights allowed aviation authorities to identify safe levels of ash concentration in the atmosphere and flights were allowed to resume towards the end of April. The volcanic ash itself is expected to hang in the atmosphere for another year and further disruptions may occur.

If some other question is clouding your mind, email me: [Mwalimu@ZainAfricaChallenge.com](mailto:Mwalimu@ZainAfricaChallenge.com) or submit your query on our website at [www.ZainAfricaChallenge.com](http://www.ZainAfricaChallenge.com)