

Relevant Information

Medellin, January 16, 2019

EPM managed the closing of the first catchment gate of the Ituango hydroelectric plant

With the expected indicators of the downstream flow of the river, stability of the massif, and operation of the first gate, among others, the partial closing of the Ituango hydroelectric project's powerhouse was completed on Wednesday.

The EPM Chief Executive Officer, Jorge Londoño De la Cuesta, reassured the surrounding communities and emphasized the high technical level and the special emphasis that was given to the community's protection and preservation of the environment, and laid out the individual tasks that were carried out in the project. He pointed out that the "main objective is to reduce the risks that communities face downstream, the people who depend on the river, and the close municipalities, which now have more reasons to feel safe because of the way this project is developing".

Standing in front of the camp project, Londoño De La Cuesta first thanked the community for its understanding and for applying the recommendations they received to successfully complete this task. He also recognized the work of the different institutions that had supported him, the National Government and its departments, the mayors of the local municipalities, and praised how the Red Cross, the Army, the Police and other relief entities had handled these contingencies, and all the contractors and EPM personnel.

estamos ahí.

The maneuver:

It all began today a little after 6:00 a.m., with a series of meticulous preparations that included activating the contingency plan, carrying out simulations, several extraordinary sessions of the National Unified Command Post, as well as the active participation of institutions such as the Red Cross, the Administrative Department for preventing and responding to disasters in Antioquia, the National Army, and the Fire Department and Civil Defense, among others.

The closing of the first gate was executed in 28 minutes with all the precautions and preventive measures that were implemented based on modeling and the studies carried out.

The operation was also permanently supervised by the Presidency of the Republic, as well as in the Crisis Room installed in the Government of Antioquia, the Unified Command Post (UCP) of the Ituango hydroelectric project, and the local UCPs installed in the municipalities of Caceres, Valdivia and Taraza.

What's next?

After closing the gate, during the 6-hour period the behavior of the different variables continued to be monitored minute by minute, including the behavior of the rock mass, the powerhouse structure, and the flow rates at the outlet portal of the discharge tunnels through which the water reaches the reservoir.

After the first six hours, the third part consisted in extending the monitoring to 48 hours for the purpose of verifying that the task had been completed as expected, and for duly identifying and responding to any unforeseen event that may have appeared. If an anomaly is logged, the monitoring must continue until the indicators are stable.

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Starting today, the reservoir will begin rising again until reaching a level that will enable the landfill to start operating again with its structure that was tested for 47 straight days late last year. When that happens, it will be possible to close the second gate, which is planned for early February.

The flow of the river will be reduced downstream of the project, due to the closing of the gate. Consequently, EPM, in coordination with the entities in charge of overseeing the environment, will maintain strict surveillance of the downstream course of the river. A total of 40 people, including biologists, assistants and artisanal fishermen, will reinforce the rescue of fish and other animal species that may become trapped in the flow of the Cauca River between the dam site and Puerto Valdivia, on account of the temporary decrease in its flow.

Alert levels in the area remain in force: red alert for the Puerto Valdivia municipality, and orange alert in all the towns on the banks of the Cauca River, from Puerto Antioquia to the urban headwaters of Taraza and Caceres. Yellow alert is for all the towns, from Caucasia to the Bolivar department.

The decision to close the first gate of the Ituango hydroelectric project was made possible by the commitment assumed by EPM to reduce the risk to the communities downstream, with a procedure that would also contribute to environmental protection, and that continues advancing with the project. This necessary procedure was anticipated upon the discovery of the tunnel that, even though it did not add risk to the closing maneuver at the time, became important to move forward so as to prevent the risk from increasing, and possibly impacting the communities.

estamos ahí.