

## DENR backs LGU's disaster response and management

By: Jing Villamente, Tribune

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga on Tuesday said her department has partnered with local executives to integrate the use of hazard maps in decision-making to avert disasters and safeguard lives and livelihoods.

"A hazard does not have to become a disaster," Loyzaga explained as she sounded off the appeal in the wake of the landslide incident in Maco, Davao de Oro, stressing the DENR's collaborative efforts with key national and local agencies to enhance the preparedness and resilience of affected communities.

Recalling the incidence of an earlier landslide in the area back in 2008, Loyzaga highlighted the significance of recognizing data-driven indicators for early warning and action. This includes the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration's (PAGASA) record of unusually high rainfall in January this year, which was four times the affected area's monthly average in the nearest weather station.

Loyzaga likewise acknowledges the importance of local government units' (LGUs)' leadership in early action guided by hazard maps. She underscores that early warning should lead to early action.

The Environment chief also emphasized the critical role of a whole-of-society approach to face these challenges with the government, communities, private sector, and even the citizens. To facilitate early disaster readiness actions and promote science-based decision-making, especially in highly vulnerable areas, the DENR, through its Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), continues to update the distributed hazard maps and conduct information, education, and communication campaigns. The agency issues tailored geohazard advisories for LGUs and concerned barangays.

This incident highlights the cooperation between DENR and the Philippine Space Agency. The timely sharing and processing of information can aid LGUs in conducting thorough disaster risk reduction measures.

The DENR in close collaboration with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), provides hazard maps and advisories for proactive disaster preparedness in alignment with the latter agency's disaster risk reduction and management program. It also provides crucial support to search and rescue operations through its MGB regional offices in Mindanao, in partnership with the private sector in the region. MGB has deployed two ground penetrating radars for the use of responders on site in Maco.