The surprise 15 January volcanic eruption in Tonga, the largest eruption of the century, produced complex, compounding and cascading disasters—from ash that blanketed the island nation and reached several other South Pacific countries, to tsunami waves that traveled across the entire Pacific Ocean basin and reached the shores of the U.S. thousands of kilometers away. A single volcanic eruption can not only devastate the surrounding area, often causing death, property damage and vast economic losses in its vicinity, but it also has the potential for far reaching, adverse impacts on agriculture, livestock, marine ecosystems and ecotourism, jeopardizing food security and livelihoods.

Our panel of experts, representing academia and federal agencies, will explain the science behind the Tonga eruption and discuss what lessons the research community has taken away so far that could help improve the U.S.’s disaster preparedness and response for future events.