After a Volcanic Eruption

Staying Safe After a Volcanic Eruption

If you do nothing else:

1. Let friends and family know you're safe.

- Register yourself as safe on the Safe and Well website

2. If evacuated, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so.

3. Continue listening to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions.

4. If people around you are injured, practice CHECK, CALL, CARE. Check the scene to be sure it's safe for you to approach, call for help, and if you are trained, provide first aid to those in need until emergency responders can arrive.

Caring for yourself & loved ones

- Stay indoors and away from volcanic ashfall areas if possible. The fine, glassy particles of volcanic ash can increase the health risks for children and people with respiratory conditions, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, or emphysema.
- Whether you are indoors or outdoors:

Wear a dust mask designed to protect against lung irritation from small particles

Protect your eyes by wearing goggles. Wear eyeglasses, not contact lenses.

Keep as much of your skin covered as possible.

- Take time to ensure your emotional recovery by following our tips.
- Keep animals away from ashfall and areas of possible hot spots. Wash animals' paws and fur or skin to prevent their ingesting or inhaling ash while grooming themselves.

- Help people who require additional assistance—infants, elderly people, those without transportation, large families who may need additional help in an emergency situation, people with disabilities, and the people who care for them.

Returning home safely

- Avoid driving in heavy ashfall. Driving will stir up volcanic ash that can clog engines and stall vehicles. Abrasion can damage moving parts, including bearings, brakes, and transmissions.
- Follow these tips for inspecting your home's structure and utilities & systems after a volcano.
- Take pictures of home damage, both of the buildings and its contents, for insurance purposes.

Cleaning and repairing your home

- Wear protective clothing, including long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and sturdy shoes, and be cautious.
- As soon as it is safe to do so, clear your roof of ashfall. Ash is very heavy and can cause buildings to collapse, especially if made wet by rain. Exercise great caution when working on a roof.
- Learn more about how to clean up after a volcano, including the supplies you'll need and how to handle fire hazards such as gas, electricity and chemicals.

Fact vs. Fiction

Volcano Fact vs. Fiction

Fiction

Volcanoes erupt with regularity.

Fact

Volcanoes generally experience a period of closely spaced eruptions followed by long periods of quiet. Most volcanoes show no regularity, and thus on the basis of past history alone cannot be considered "overdue" or "ready to blow."

Fiction

Volcanoes are unpredictable, erupting at any time without warning.

Fact

Volcanoes usually give warning signs that they are going to erupt weeks to months or more in advance. Although we cannot predict when a volcano will start to be restless, once activity begins, scientists can make general forecasts about how soon an eruption will occur. A more difficult challenge for volcanologists is forecasting the size of an impending eruption.

Fiction

Lava flows are the most significant hazards from volcanoes in the United States.

Fact

Although this is true in Hawaii, the hazards differ at the more than 150 volcanoes in other parts of the United States. Principal hazards outside Hawaii include:

1. Volcanic ashfall resulting from explosive-style eruptions. Volcanic ash, the shattered remnants of volcanic rock, rises into the atmosphere, where it is a hazard to aircraft and affects large areas downwind when it falls back to earth. Where it falls in sufficient quantity, it can cause difficulties for vehicles, machinery, and utilities, and can be injurious to human health.

2. Volcanic mudflows (lahars) resulting from the sudden melting of snow and ice during eruptions. Lahars can inundate river valleys tens of miles distant, destroying bridges, highways, and other types of development, as well as endangering people.

Fiction

Earthquakes cause volcanic eruptions.

Fact

Earthquakes indicate a geologically active landscape, but they are not the cause of volcanic eruptions. In rare cases, large tectonic earthquakes have triggered eruptions of nearby volcanoes that have been poised to erupt

anyway. In the case of Mount St. Helens, a flurry of earthquakes under the volcano suggested potential eruptive activity.