

For more information

For details on emergency response planning at the state or local level, contact:

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ASH

ALERT!



Image courtesy of AVO/USGS

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY, HOME AND BUSINESS

Volcanic ash is the most common hazard from eruptions in Alaska

What is volcanic ash?

Volcanic ash is produced during explosive eruptions and carried downwind where it falls to the ground.

Volcanic ash consists of tiny jagged pieces of rock, minerals and glass. It is hard, abrasive, mildly corrosive, conducts electricity when wet, and does not dissolve in water.

What are the impacts?

Volcanic ash impacts are caused by ashfall and by the airborne volcanic cloud, and vary depending upon location.

Airborne volcanic clouds can impact aviation operations to and from Alaska, as well as within the state. The areas that are impacted depend upon the wind speed and direction.

Ashfall is also determined by the winds, as well as distance to the volcano. It can vary from being barely discernible to high concentration that can block out sunlight, depending upon location.

Volcanic ash can be an air quality problem for those at risk, damage mechanical equipment, and impact power and water utilities. The ash deposit can remain a problem until cleanup is completed.

Prepare ahead of time

Alaskans face a variety of natural hazards from severe storms, wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides. Preparedness for ashfall from volcanic eruptions is similar to preparing for other hazards, with several additions.

Basic Disaster Supply Kit

- Nonperishable food for two weeks
- Water (1.5 gal/day/person) in clean plastic containers
- Unique supplies for infants, elders, and pets
- Prescription medicine and first aid kit
- Cell phone battery charging pack, battery operated radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs
- Basic tool kit and fire extinguisher

Additional Supplies for Ashfall

- Dust masks for adults and children such as a N95 respirator.
- Spare air and oil filters, windshield wipers and washer fluid for vehicles.
- Plastic sheeting and tape to cover sensitive equipment and/or ease cleanup.

Home

Before an Ashfall

Maintain a home emergency kit. If your water supply is vulnerable to power outages or contamination, store additional water before an ashfall happens. Cover outdoor wood piles. Purchase a fine particle filter for shop vacuum cleaners (like those used when sanding drywall).

During an Ashfall

- Monitor information from the National Weather Service and emergency management agencies and follow their guidance
- Stay indoors if possible
- Close doors, windows and dampers and eliminate draft sources.
- Remove volcanic ash from wood before burning.
- Cover sensitive or valuable property with plastic sheets or bags to simplify cleanup.

After an Ashfall

- Wear a dust mask (N95 respirator) and eye protection during ash cleanup.
- Vacuum floors, furniture and surfaces. To reduce scratches, vacuum surfaces instead of wiping them. If using a shop-vac, add a fine particle filter to prevent generating clouds of ash inside.
- When sweeping, dampen or sprinkle ash with a sweeping compound to avoid raising unnecessary dust.
- Mow lawns when damp and bag clippings to reduce dust.
- Replace items used from the emergency kit.

Family

Before an Ashfall

Instruct family on emergency and safety procedures. Have indoor games and activities available. Consider organizing a community day care center to help working parents during ashfall clean-up and to keep children in a cleaner environment. Plan for sheltering pets and livestock.

During an Ashfall

- Stay indoors if possible, and use respirators and minimize exertion if outdoors.
- Do not attempt to pick your children up at school, unless directed to do so. Schools will be notified of emergency procedures to take
- Remain calm and maintain normal routines with children.
- Call 911 if a person w/ a heart or lung condition experiences worsening symptoms.
- Keep pets indoors as much as possible.
- Keep livestock indoors or under cover as much as possible.
- Cover hay and feed for livestock.
- Provide clean drinking water.
- If pets go out, brush ash off before letting them back inside.

After an Ashfall

- Limit outdoor activities for children and pets until ash dust is no longer evident.
- Ash cleanup may take a long time (many months). Monitor messages about air quality concerns, especially if at higher medical risk.

Auto

Before an Ashfall

Maintain auto emergency items such as air and oil filters, windshield wiper blades and fluid, and emergency road flares. If traveling long distances, be prepared to shelter in your vehicle in case travel is interrupted.

During an Ashfall

- Do not drive unless absolutely necessary.
- If you must drive, drive slowly. Do not follow the car ahead too close. Ash covered road can be slippery, especially when wet.
- Use your windshield washer system anytime you must use your wipers.
- Change your air filter if you notice a loss of power in your car's engine, and do not drive without a filter. If car stalls, push it off the road to avoid collisions and then stay inside the auto.

After an Ashfall

- Change oil, oil filter, and air filter.
- Wash your car thoroughly with water to remove all ash. Do not brush off surfaces as it will cause damage.



Workplace

Before an Ashfall

Become familiar with your employers emergency plans. Encourage employers to have an early release policy to allow employees to get home before ashfall occurs. Maintain a workplace emergency kit.

During an Ashfall

- Do not operate non-essential equipment
- Protect sensitive equipment and surfaces with plastic sheeting to simplify cleanup.
- If possible, go home before ash begins to fall
- If ash is already falling and visibility is reduced, shelter in place until indoors until the ash has stopped conditions improve.
- If it is not possible to go indoors, get into your car and shelter in place until conditions improve.

After an Ashfall

- Clean up ash using the same procedures as noted under home cleanup.
- Replace items used from emergency kit

Resources

- Ashfall warning information: [weather.gov/afc](https://www.weather.gov/afc)
- Ashfall impacts and mitigation: volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanic_ash/
- Alaska Volcano Observatory: avo.alaska.edu/