



EVACUATION AND PREPARATION

Volcanic eruptions and lahars are frightening natural disasters. It is important to prepare ahead of time.

The eruption of Mount St. Helens on May 18, 1980 killed 57 people, destroyed 27 bridges and almost 200 homes, and caused disruption for thousands of people. You can minimize damage and loss of life by being prepared for a volcanic emergency. One of the most important things you can do is **learn about your risks**.

BEFORE AN ERUPTION

- Learn about your risks—Know the danger and hazards you face at home, at work, and where you relax, adventure, or travel.
- Plan ahead. Have emergency supplies, food, and water stored.
- Plan an evacuation route away from streams that may carry lahars or landslide debris.
- Make sure your emergency provisions contain a pair of goggles and disposable breathing masks for ash and dust.
- Make a family emergency plan so that you know how to contact your family members in case of an emergency.
- Stay informed: Listen to media outlets for warnings and evacuations. Listen for [All Hazard Alert Broadcast sirens](#) that warn of lahars. Check out the [Volcano Notification Service](#) to subscribe to alerts about specific volcanoes.
- Ask local and state emergency offices and schools about their response plans. Be prepared to follow official guidance.

Be informed. Make a plan. Build a kit. Educate and protect your family, neighbors, and friends.

DURING AN ERUPTION

- Follow evacuation orders issued by authorities. **Evacuate immediately from an erupting volcano!**
- Be aware that lahars and other types of landslides or debris flows can travel great distances from the volcano. **Avoid river valleys and other low-lying areas** that may be prone to these hazards.
- If you are in a [lahar hazard zone](#) and become aware of an oncoming lahar, **get to high ground and then shelter in place**. If there are signs for evacuation routes, follow them.

- Stay informed: Watch and/or listen for additional information.
- Listen for [All Hazard Alert Broadcast sirens](#) that warn of lahars.
- Do your part to remain safe and help others in need.

IF THERE IS ASHFALL...

Protect your lungs!

Volcanic ash is made of microscopic shards of glass and other fine-grained material. Ash can cause significant damage to animals, including significant damage to lungs or asphyxiation if inhaled.

- If there is falling ash and you cannot evacuate, remain indoors with doors, windows, and ventilation systems closed until the ash settles.
- Help infants, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions.
- Wear a respirator, face mask, or use a damp cloth across your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Use goggles, and wear eyeglasses instead of contact lenses.
- Avoid driving in heavy ash fall unless absolutely required. If you must drive, reduce your speed significantly.
- Avoid operating engines of any kind. Ash can clog engines, damage parts, and stall vehicles.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Keep roofs free of ash in excess of 4 inches.
- Limit outdoor activity. Remove outdoor clothing before entering a building.
- Check to ensure that ash does not contaminate your water. If it does, use a different source, such as bottled water.
- For more information about ash fall, check out the [USGS Volcanic Ash website](#).

AFTER AN ERUPTION

- Go to a designated public shelter or evacuation area if you have been told to evacuate or you feel it is unsafe to remain in your home. Text **SHELTER** + your ZIP code to **43362** (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (example: **shelter 98506**)
- Stay informed: Watch and/or listen for additional information. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the internet for official instructions and information.
- Do not approach the eruption area.
- Be prepared to stay indoors and avoid downwind areas.
- Be aware of lahars and landslides. These hazards can occur long after the main eruption.