

MT. ST. HELENS HAZARD INFORMATION

JOHN SPELLMAN
Governor



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DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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Dear Visitor:

On behalf of Governor John Spellman, I welcome you to this spectacular region of Washington State, which features Mount St. Helens, an active volcano. Your stay in this area will be even more enjoyable if you observe the following precautions and restrictions:

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

For your safety, Washington State and the U.S. Forest Service have created a Hazard Zone in a limited area surrounding the mountain (see shaded area on map on reverse side). Entry to the Hazard Zone is by permit only and is strictly enforced. This is for your protection because of the continuing possibility of eruptive activity or flash flooding. Illegal entry is a gross misdemeanor. Hazard Zone boundaries are clearly marked on public roads. Staying off privately-owned roads will prevent inadvertent illegal entry. Detailed Hazard Zone maps are displayed at various Information Centers, Ranger Stations, Sheriffs' Offices, and other public facilities in this area. During quiet to moderate periods of volcanic activity, the Hazard Zone remains restricted. A larger Hazard Zone can be ordered restricted if major volcanic activity is predicted.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

All water obtained in the vicinity of the volcano should be considered **unsafe** for drinking, cooking, dishwashing, toothbrushing, etc. If that water must be used, strain debris and boil vigorously for two minutes.

Most ash from the past eruptions has been dissipated by wind and rain; however, surface ash which still remains can be blown by the wind or vehicular traffic. Inhalation of ash will not cause disease, but sufferers of pulmonary conditions may experience discomfort from prolonged exposure.

Minor ashfall from eruptions or steam emissions is a relatively minimal hazard and can be dealt with by breathing through a handkerchief or particle mask.

DRIVING HAZARDS

Residual volcanic ash, when blown, can reduce visibility. When wet, the roads can be extremely slick. Many logging trucks use these roads. Use care when passing, drive with caution, and observe normal safe-driving rules.

FLASH FLOODING AND RIVER HAZARDS

The North Fork of the Toutle River can be extremely dangerous due to deep mud and "quicksand" in riverbed areas, and the banks are very unstable. Use caution near this river.

There is also the possibility of flash flooding in the Toutle River Valley due to rapid snowmelt caused by an eruption or the failure of one of several debris dams which form large lakes, such as Spirit Lake, near the volcano. There are warning systems installed at these lakes and sirens in the valley to warn people if a flash flood is detected. Should you hear the sirens, follow posted evacuation signs.



EVACUATION ROUTES

Highways 503, 504, and 505 and some secondary roads are posted for emergency evacuation of the Toutle River Valley and Mount St. Helens area. In the event of another major eruption or flash flooding, follow these routes out of the area. Learn to recognize the evacuation route signs as shown at left; each has a white background with black lettering and a directional arrow. They will direct you out at major intersections and along the main highways. If an evacuation is ordered, please cooperate fully with local, county, and state law enforcement officials, who will ensure an orderly evacuation of residents and visitors.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Near the junction of State Routes 504 and 505, the Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Governor's Office and Department of Emergency Services, has installed a Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) system. Within a mile radius of this intersection, tune to 1610 megahertz on your AM radio for current mountain status reports or emergency information. Otherwise, tune to local radio stations for possible emergency information. Primary Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) AM radio stations in this area include: Cowlitz County, KBAM-1270; Clark County, KGAR-1550; Lewis County, KELS-1470; and Skamania County, KHR-1340. Many other local AM and FM stations provide emergency information.

PREDICTING ERUPTIONS

Although U.S. Geological Survey scientists are constantly improving their predictive ability, visitors should be aware that no volcano is 100 percent predictable, even under the most watchful eyes and with the latest equipment and instruments. If an eruption is expected soon, warnings and additional information will be broadcast on the EBS system.

Your visit to this impressive natural area will be even more enjoyable if you carefully observe the precautions and restrictions explained in this letter.

Have a memorable and safe visit to the Mount St. Helens region.

Sincerely,

Hugh H. Fowler
Director

Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument

Public Access Map

