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MOUNT ST. HELENS
TECHNICAL INFORMATION
NETWORK



FEDERAL
COORDINATING
OFFICE

federal emergency
management agency

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BULLETIN #15 - "Volcanic Ash And Your Water Supply"

As the nation's largest water resources data agency, the United States Geological Survey monitors the quantity and quality of the nation's water resources at more than 48,000 stations across the country. Reports received from the USGS main offices in Reston, Va., over the weekend indicate that there is no cause for alarm as to water purity in areas affected by the Mount St. Helens ashfall.

The chemical constituents expected to dissolve naturally from ash erupted from Mount St. Helens volcano and spread across Washington, Idaho, and Montana should not significantly affect water supplies, according to preliminary tests by the USGS, Department of the Interior.

USGS hydrologists have soaked ash samples collected in Spokane and Richland, Wa., and in Helena and Kalispell, Montana, in water for four hours and then analyzed the leachate (soaking water) for concentrations of about 70 soluble chemical elements and compounds. The test simulated the effects of 0.3 inches of rain falling on 0.5 inches of ash.

Dr. Jack Pickering, Chief, Quality of Water Branch, USGS National Center, Reston, Va., reports, "Based on the results so far, we do not believe domestic or livestock water supplies in areas that received 0.5 inches or less of ash are in danger of excessive chemical concentrations for most uses. We are less certain of the effects in areas that received heavier ashfalls and will continue to

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