

You can prepare for the worst. Or you can hope for the best.

Why not do both?



From the office of
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How bad could it be?
The threat of a lahar

When people think of disasters, they typically think of things like the 9/11 terrorist attacks and natural disasters such as Katrina, the hurricane that devastated the Gulf coast last year. But the most likely threat to residents of this area would come from Mount Rainier — and it wouldn't be in the form of the lava or poisonous gases that make for dramatic scenes on TV and in films. The threat here would most likely come in the form of a lahar — a volcanic mudflow caused by rapidly melting snow and ice.

Resembling a wave of flowing concrete, lahars from Mount Rainier have traveled 45-to-50 miles per hour in confined valleys before slowing and thinning in the wide valleys that have been populated since the last lahar. Indeed, buried deep beneath some of today's fastest-growing neighborhoods are trees that were covered over by lahars. A lahar can occur either as a result of an eruption or even during non-eruptive times without the profound seismicity and other warnings that precede eruptions; in either case, a lahar would easily destroy most man-made structures in its path.

The likely courses of lahars are the five major river valleys that flow from Mount Rainier, four of which flow westward into suburban areas of Pierce County. Lahars from an eruption could reach valley areas miles from the volcano.



Mount Rainier
The most dangerous volcano in the United States

Mount Rainier is an active volcano that is at rest between eruptions; a new eruption could produce volcanic ash, lava flows or lahars. Research by the U.S. Geological Survey indicates Mount Rainier caused many lahars that buried areas that have since become densely populated. While Mount Rainier has erupted less often and less explosively in recent history than Mount St. Helens, Mount Rainier's proximity to densely populated areas — including 100,000 people who live atop the deposits of past lahars — makes it a more likely threat to life and property. The risk that property in this area might be hit by a lahar is comparable to that of a fire.

Limited warning time



A lahar slows as it travels, so it might take as much as 1 to 2 hours to reach lowland valleys but could reach the nearest large population area within 45 minutes. Urban areas closest to Mount Rainier, in the Puyallup Valley, might have as little as 40 minutes to evacuate. How well people evacuate will depend on the direction of the lahar, effective warning, the public's understanding of the danger, and how well the public has practiced responding.

Identify a contact person

How would you and your loved ones contact each other if an emergency struck? Identify a friend or family member who would be a contact person, preferably outside the local calling area to decrease the odds that he/she will be affected by the same disaster. Make sure everyone knows this person's name and number, or knows where to find it quickly and easily in any emergency; better yet, persuade them to carry this information in a wallet or other personal item they are likely to keep on their person.

In an emergency, family members are to call the contact person and report their whereabouts (a home, a school, a business, a supermarket, wherever the disaster finds them); once you have this information, you can decide whether it is safe to try to reunite. If it is possible to meet without increasing anyone's jeopardy, use your contact to help coordinate the details of when and where to meet.

Form a neighborhood network

Talk to your neighbors. Plan a neighborhood meeting where you can decide how to work together in the event of a disaster or terrorist attack. Discuss the needs of elderly or disabled neighbors, and plan how you can help each other care for your children if someone is away or otherwise unable to return. Identify which neighbors have special skills, such as medical expertise. For information on how to form a neighborhood emergency team, call Pierce County Emergency Management at 253-798-6595.

Know the evacuation plan for your child's school

The valley schools have very detailed evacuation and reuniting plans, but many parents don't know them. Familiarize yourself with the plan for your child's school, and store a copy of the plan where you'll remember to find it in an emergency.

If you are being evacuated

If a disaster occurs close to home, stay calm. Listen to radio and television stations for emergency broadcast information and, if possible, check with local authorities as to how to proceed. If you are in immediate danger, you will be told to leave your home. If so:

- Head quickly to a designated shelter or similar protective location. Your emergency broadcast system should provide updates with any changes in shelter location. Above all, if police tell you to evacuate immediately, do so!
- If you must evacuate your home, find your disaster survival kit. If there is time, each family member should put on long pants and a thick jacket. If you can safely use the phone, call your emergency contact and tell them where you plan to go
- Authorities will tell you whether to leave your utilities on or turn them off. Lock all doors and windows to your home.
- Follow whatever routes are designated by emergency management crews.

Keep trusted neighbors informed

If you will be out of town on a trip or vacation, inform a friend or neighbor you trust. Provide instructions on how to secure your property in the event of a disaster or attack, and show them your disaster plan. Tell them where you will be staying and how to reach you. Be sure to show them the information for your emergency contact person in case they are unable to reach you and there is damage to your property.

Emergency radio broadcasts

- **AM 1580** — If a disaster occurs, tune into the City of Puyallup's emergency radio station at 1580 on your AM dial
- **All-weather radios** — Just as a smoke detector warns you of a fire, an all-weather radio warns you of immediate, life-threatening hazards in your area, including earthquakes, lahars and terrorist attacks. Weather radios can be purchased from radio electronics stores and Internet outlets for approximately \$50, are portable and have battery backup in the event of power outages. Some weather radio receivers have attachments for the hearing- and sight-impaired.

How to talk to your kids

Having experienced less than adults, children are likely to react differently in a crisis. Here's how you can help them:

- When doing disaster planning, involve children and give older children an active role. This can help them cope better during a crisis.
- During a disaster, limit your children's exposure to media reports. Younger children especially might think rerun footage represents fresh calamities or attacks.
- Children can, and will, pick up on adults' fear. As best you can, remain calm.
- When your children ask questions, answer in as straightforward a manner as you can and offer reassurance. At the same time, keep answers simple and brief and try not to provide more information than your child really needs.

Important numbers

For life threatening fire, police or medical emergencies,

Call 911

National Poison Control: 800-222-1222

LOCAL RED CROSS CHAPTER

AREA SHELTER

VETERINARIAN

SCHOOL(S)

EMPLOYER(S)

This record should include all household members, and everyone should keep a similar copy in their purse or wallet. Share these records with your out-of-area contact person.

Household Information

NAME PHONE

ADDRESS

CELL PHONE EMAIL

ASSEMBLY PLACE IF YOU CANNOT RETURN HOME

HOME INSURANCE COMPANY POLICY#

AUTO INSURANCE COMPANY LIC#

MEDICAL INSURANCE CARRIER POLICY#

Family Medical Information

NAME

DOCTOR'S NAME

MEDICATION

PRESCRIPTION #

PHARMACY PHONE

ALLERGIES

NAME

DOCTOR'S NAME

MEDICATION

PRESCRIPTION #

PHARMACY PHONE

ALLERGIES

NAME

DOCTOR'S NAME

MEDICATION

PRESCRIPTION #

PHARMACY PHONE

ALLERGIES

NAME

DOCTOR'S NAME

MEDICATION

PRESCRIPTION #

PHARMACY PHONE

ALLERGIES

Your Disaster Plan

Use this space to fill in information regarding your household disaster plan. Once you have completed this form, make photocopies and supply one to each member of your family:

In the event of an emergency in our home, we will meet at :

Location Close By Your Home

In the event of an emergency and we are unable to return home, we will meet at :

Location

Address

Phone Number

Our Family's Emergency Contact is :

Name

Address

Daytime Phone Number

Evening Phone Number

Email

The Disaster survival kit is located :

Location

Dear friend and neighbor,

We tend to think disasters happen only to "the other guy." But the reality is that disasters happen anywhere, anytime — on a given day any of us could become the unfortunate "other guy" we hear about on nightly newscasts — and it could take hours or days for rescue workers to arrive.

If the unthinkable should occur here, this pamphlet could help. It's filled with simple tips that can help you or your loved ones survive an unforeseen crisis, whether in the form of a lahar or some unspeakable man-made threat. Either way, the time to prepare is now, before it hits. This pamphlet can guide you through simple, easy to follow steps that require minimal time, money or effort today but could prove invaluable in a time of emergency.

Sincerely,



Jim Kastama
Senator
25th Legislative District

P.S. This pamphlet was paid for with funds that are normally set aside for legislative newsletters; I thought you would find this more useful. I urge you to interrupt your busy day for just a few minutes to look it over and to take the time to follow up on a few of the simple tips. A few minutes of your time now could mean the difference between relief and tragedy in the event of an emergency.

