FEDERAL COORDINATING OFFICE
federal emergency management agency

MOUNT ST. HELENS
TECHNICAL INFORMATION NETWORK

Friday, May 30, 1980

BULLETIN #7 - "Ash Particles and Home Clean-Up Problems --- Advice From the University of Idaho'

Furniture, fabrics and floor coverings may be damaged by volcanic ash particles that are sharp-edged, according to Sonja Rue and Shirley Nilsson, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service family living specialists.

The ash from the Mt. St. Helens volcano is different from ordinary house dust. Its sharp crystalline structure causes it to scratch surfaces when it is brushed for removal.

To clean household surfaces, the extension specialists said as much dust as possible should be removed with a vacuum cleaner. Then:

--After vacuuming carpets and upholstery, you may want to use a detergent shampoo cleaner. Avoid excess rubbing action because the sharp ash particles may cut the textile fibers.

--Glass, porcelain enamel and acrylic surfaces may be scratched if wiped too vigorously. Use a detergent-soaked cloth or sponge and dab or blot rather than wipe.

--High-shine wood finishes will be dulled by the fine grit. Vacuum surfaces and then blot with a cloth treated to pick up dust. A tack cloth used by furniture refinishers should work well.

Ash-coated fabrics should be rinsed under running water and then washed carefully. Remember:

--Soiled clothing will require extra detergent. Wash small loads of clothing, using plenty of water so the clothes will have room to move freely in the water.

--Do not mix heavily soiled clothes with garments that are lightly soiled.

--Be sure clothes are free of ash before putting them in an automatic dryer. Ash may scratch the inner surface of the dryer.

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parts or covers, work in a dust-free area.

The ash will not corrode metal, plastic, or rubber, but it is very abrasive. This means that belts and chains will wear out more rapidly than normal.

II. VOLCANIC ASH SUSPECT IN PUMP PROBLEMS

Several recommendations for dealing with problems that volcanic ash is causing in irrigation sprinklers were issued Friday by Washington State University agricultural scientists.

Jim Griffin, Yakima County extension agent, and Dr. Larry James, a WSU agricultural engineer, advised that measures should be taken--where possible-- to reduce the amount of ash in irrigation water before it is pumped.

Griffin said some farmers are reporting rapid wear on pump seals, packing glands and occasionally on bearings.

He advised farmers to use settling basins whenever possible to reduce the amount of grit flowing through pumps. Wear also can be minimized by insuring that packing glands are not too tight. A slow drip of water is desirable to wash some of the dust particles through the packing.

Dust reduction measures were recommended around pumps to prevent overheating because of dust buildup in the pump ventilation system. Griffin said wetting the dust around pumps, cultivating to bury dust, or working straw into the nearby ground should help.

Griffin also said worn sprinkler nozzles can contribute to overheating because they force pumps to work harder. Nozzle wear should be checked with the end of a new drill bit and severely worn nozzles should be replaced.

There also have been reports of grit freezing sprinkler heads. Griffin said farmers should check sprinklers frequently to ensure that they are operating properly. Frozen heads usually can be freed by manually forcing the head to turn.

Sediment is reported to build up in main lines and laterals. Griffin recommends flushing them at least once a day to prevent buildup.

--During the next few months, filters must be replaced often. Air conditioner and furnace filters need careful attention.

--Clean refrigerator air intakes. Clean any surface that may blow air and recirculate the dust. Stove fans and vents should be cleaned thoroughly.