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OFFICE

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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