

GENERAL  
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NETWORK

federal emergency  
management agency

Friday, June 6, 1980

BULLETIN #14 - "Protecting Children From Volcanic Ash-Related  
Health Hazards"

Previous Technical Information Bulletins have discussed the health hazards of the volcanic ash (Technical Information Bulletin #8 and #10) and precautions that can be taken in ashfall areas (Technical Information Bulletin #3). At this time, short term exposure to the ash is not considered a significant health threat to the general public.

Children may face the same hazards from the suspension in air of volcanic ash as other age groups, except they are unlikely to be routinely exposed to heavy concentrations of ash as are certain occupational groups. However, their exposure may be increased because they are physically smaller and are less likely to adopt reasonable, prudent, preventive measures to avoid undue exposures.

A preliminary study of the effects of the ashfalls of 5/18 and 5/25 on high risk pediatric populations has been initiated by the University of Washington Schools of Medicine and Public Health. At this time, it does not appear that asthmatic children in the paths of these ashfall plumes have had any significant increase in their symptoms compared to children with similar respiratory problems who live in unaffected parts of the state.

The volcanic ash may cause irritation of the lungs or exacerbation or symptoms in children suffering respiratory illness (asthma, cystic fibrosis, tuberculosis). Preliminary samples of the ash show only low levels of free crystalline silica (5% by weight of the inhalable ash).

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