

Mt. Redoubt Erupting

Monday, 23 March 2009

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Annie Fiedt/APRN

Mount

Redoubt is erupting near Anchorage. The volcano exploded several times late last night and this morning, sending ash columns as high as 60-thousand-feet in the air. Winds are pushing the ash west of the most populated areas of the state. But a thin layer of heavy residue has fallen on the isolated village of Skwentna. Dozens of flights in and out of Anchorage have been canceled.

Steve Childs

helps run a lodge there. He says he peered out his window early this morning:

-- 23volcano noon 1 Time: 17s

There are

no roads in and out of Skwentna, so he and others in the village are preparing to wait out the eruption. He says he has plenty of food in the freezer and a moose hanging in the shed:

-- 23 volcano noon 2 Time: 14s

Light ash

fall has also been reported in Trapper Creek and at the Chuitna crossing on the Parks Highway. Volcanic ash can cause respiratory problems but the most serious threat is to airplanes. The ash can seep into jet engines, causing them to fail. Alaska Airlines has canceled more than a dozen flights in and out of Anchorage, but most southbound flights are still taking off.

In a conference call earlier today, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said the agency is working with the Federal Aviation Administration to make sure airlines are taking the necessary precautions to ensure passenger safety:

-- 23 volcano noon 3 Time: 11s

Mount

Redoubt last erupted in the winter of 1989 and 1990 - an episode that lasted four months. Tom Murray is the lead scientist at the Alaska Volcano Observatory in Anchorage.

He expects a similar scenario this time around:

-- 23 volcano noon 4 Time: 14s

The Drift

River oil terminal, which sits at the base of Mount Redoubt has been evacuated. The eruption has already melted glacial ice on the mountain and sent water flowing over the runway at the terminal. Officials are hoping a barrier built around the oil storage tanks after Redoubt's last eruption will hold up.

Volcanologists haven't had a close up view of Mount Redoubt since it began erupting. They are hoping to take a helicopter up to the Volcano today to get a better handle on the eruption activity.

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