Volcanic ashfall
Clean up

GENERAL CLEAN UP

- Avoid unnecessary exposure to ash as it can irritate eyes and airways.
- Coordinate with the city, Tribe and whole community on the ash clean up.
- Do not start cleaning up until the ashfall has stopped (except in extreme cases).
- Cleaning can easily stir ash back up into the air. Prevent contaminating previously cleaned areas by cleaning top-down and with the wind direction in mind.
- Avoid excess scrubbing or rubbing, since ash particles can scratch surfaces.
- Spraying a little water on ash while cleaning can help keep it out of the air, but too much water can turn the ash into a glue-like "cake" material, which is heavy and difficult to remove.
- Avoid unnecessary driving as it can stir ash back up into the air and damage your vehicle.
- You can still eat produce from your garden, but wash it first before eating.

LIMIT ASH THAT ENTERS YOUR HOME DURING CLEAN UP

- Create an area where people can remove shoes and outdoor clothes before entering the rest of the building (use arctic entries if available).
- Keep pets inside as much as possible. You can let them out briefly, but brush them off before they come back in to avoid tracking in more ash.

STAYING SAFE DURING CLEAN UP

- Wear respirators (preferably N-95 if available), goggles, long sleeves, pants, gloves, sturdy footwear, and safety harnesses to protect yourself from unnecessary exposure to ash and from falling off roofs or ladders.
- Avoid unnecessary exercising or physical activity that will make you breathe heavier.
- Wear glasses instead of contact lenses (volcanic ash can get under the lens and scratch your eye and the contact lens).
- Be mindful of others while cleaning to prevent any unnecessary exposure to ash or contamination of previously cleaned areas.

Protective face mask to prevent inhalation of ash during cleanup.

https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanic_ash/personal_protection_equipment.html

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

For more information, contact the ANTHC Community Environment and Health department at CEH@anthc.org

CLEANING UP OUTSIDE

- It's recommended to only clean off roofs in cases of heavy ashfall (over 4 inches), which is rare in most communities. Be aware that roofs may be slippery or weakened by the weight of the ash.
  - For major ashfall events - use shovels to remove the bulk (over 1/2 inch) then use brooms. Collect ash in plastic bags.
  - For minor ashfall events - avoid cleaning the roof unless it cannot withstand the load. Allow ash to settle into yards.
- Clean around air intake vents thoroughly.
- Clean gutters and disconnect gutter drains/downspouts as soon as practical. Clogged gutters can cause building damage and flooding.
- Follow directions from local authorities on how to dispose of the ash since it's usually kept separate from regular household waste.
- When using sharp edged tools like shovels and rakes, avoid direct contact with the roofing material.

Ash clean up from roof in Anchorage, Alaska following the 1992 Spurr eruption

CLEANING UP INSIDE

Cleaning up inside after ashfall includes vacuuming computers, office equipment, appliances and other items

https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanic_ash/computers_electronics.html

- Avoid cleaning methods that stir ash back up into the air (like sweeping or dusting).
- Use damp rags to dab rather than wipe to avoid scratching surfaces.
- Use a vacuum to clean carpets, furniture, appliances, and electronics. Avoid contaminating any previously cleaned spaces while emptying the vacuum.
- Keep electronics and appliances shut off while cleaning them.
- Wash ash covered clothes in small loads with plenty of water and extra detergent. Make sure clothes are free of ash before putting them in the dryer to avoid damaging the dryer.
- Clean and monitor any equipment with air intakes (HVACs, refrigerators, stove exhausts). Replace filters as necessary and note that filters may need to be replaced more often in the months following the ash fall event.
- Boil a pot of water to help remove the suspended ash from the air.

RESOURCES

https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanic_ash/

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/volcanoes/during.html

http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/Pages/volcanoes/default.aspx