

REMOVING VOLCANIC ASH FROM INSIDE THE HOME

This information provided by the Municipality of Anchorage, Office of Emergency Management.

The volcanic ash from is different than common household dust and dirt. Its crystalline structure of the new ash is sharp, jagged, and angular

These wind-abraded particles could be easily brushed off, but the sharp angles of the ash cause it to cling to all surfaces, particularly to fabrics or surfaces covered with textiles. The sharp, crystalline structure of the ash causes it to scratch surfaces when it is brushed for removal.

The jagged pieces in the ash will scratch porcelain enamel, glass, painted surfaces, appliances, wood furniture, acrylic furniture, hard surface flooring, and many other interior home surfaces. The static nature of the ash makes it cling to fabrics, hair, and shoes.

CLOTHING

- Avoid rubbing action on fabric that contains ash. The sharp particles may break or abrade the fibers that make up the yarns from which the fabric is woven or knit.
- Shake garments vigorously outdoors to remove as much loose ash as possible. Vacuuming garments may also remove excessive soil.
- Rinse and pre-soak rather than simply soaking. A more effective method of pretreatment might be to run water through the clothes until the water runs clear. An enzyme pre-soak product will not enhance cleaning. Most pre-soaks are enzyme products to remove protein stains. The ash is inorganic material; the particulates can be removed with detergent and water.
- Use detergent to wash garments. You may wish to double the detergent to help suspend the hardness minerals found in the ash. Also, excessively soiled clothes always -require more detergent than specified on the package for use in a normal wash load.
- Under load the washing machine so clothes have room to move freely in the water. Crowding the load may result in an abrasive action as ash-ridden garments rub against each other - a crowded load might not come out clean.
- Bleach, oxygen or chlorine, in combination with iron in the ash, may cause irreversible problems. Iron in certain forms can activate bleach products and cause degradation of fibers. This may not be noticeable at first.
- Use additives for very heavily soiled clothes. A borax laundry additive, such as *Borateem®* or *20 Mule Team Borax®*, can be used with the detergent in the wash water.
 - These products adjust the pH (alkalinity) at the level for maximum cleaning efficiency of the detergent.
 - *Borateem®* has enzymes, which are not required for the ash.
 - *20 Mule Team Borax®* is as effective for pH adjustment for this type of soil (volcanic ash).

- Do not mix heavily soiled clothes with garments that are lightly soiled.
- Dry in an automatic dryer only when the ash has been removed as the ash may scratch the inside surface of the dryer.

HOUSEHOLD SURFACES

- Vacuum fiber upholstery to remove as much ash as possible.
 - Adjust for maximum suction and change the bag frequently.
 - A detergent shampoo may help remove the ash that is adhered to soiled areas.
- Rugs and carpets can be cleaned most effectively with a high-powered upright vacuum cleaner.
 - The greater the suction (along with the action of an agitator bar or brush) the more ash can be removed.
 - Some of the powerful rental vacuums with suction only might be good choices for heavy removal over large carpeted areas.
 - Once the dust has settled and you have removed as much as possible, then clean rugs, furniture, etc., following procedures recommended in normal situations.
- Glass, enamel, and acrylic finishes may be scratched and dulled by the fine ash particles acting as a scouring powder.
 - Remove the large particles by vacuum or blowing or air dusting (feather duster).
 - Wear a mask if there is a lot of ash in the air.
 - Then wipe the surface with a detergent soaked cloth or sponge.
 - Dab or blot rather than wipe where possible to reduce scratching.
- High shine wood finishes will be dulled by the fine grit and scratched by objects set on it. Air dust (vacuum) surfaces then blot with a cloth treated to pick up dust - depending on the wood finish involved. A tack cloth, of the type used by furniture refinishers would work well. This can be bought at a paint store.

INTERIOR APPLIANCES

- Be sure to replace all filters and replace often for the next few months. Don't turn on air conditioners until they have been thoroughly vacuumed and filters replaced. Furnace filters must be replaced.
- Clean refrigerator air intakes. Clean any surface that may blow air and re-circulate the dust. Stove fans and vents should be thoroughly cleaned.