

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30333

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CDC--MOUNT ST. HELENS VOLCANO HEALTH REPORT #2

June 2, 1980

Surveillance of hospital emergency room visits

A number of hospitals in the States of Washington, Idaho, and Montana are included in the surveillance network. To date, 9 hospitals in Washington, 5 in Idaho, and 7 in Montana have complete reporting on the number of emergency room (ER) visits for the period of May 11-26, 1980. Because the Moses Lake area (including Moses Lake, population 10,900; Othello, population 4,649; and Ritzville, population 1,940) is most affected by the eruptions, the 3 hospitals in that area are reported separately from the other 6 in Washington. All hospitals are located in areas with volcanic ash fallout. The amount of ash is lower in Idaho than Washington, and lower in Montana than Idaho.

Table 1 shows the daily ER visits for the Moses Lake area, and the States of Washington, Idaho, and Montana during May 11-26, 1980. For the Moses Lake area, the number of visits increased steadily after the first volcanic eruption, on May 18. In the week of May 18-24, the ER visits increased 34.2% over the number the previous week, May 11-17 (Table 2). The hospitals in Washington and Montana showed increases of 2.7% and 8.0%, respectively. However, in Idaho the ER visits decreased 9.1% in the week after the first eruption (Table 2), but appeared to be increasing after the second eruption, on May 25, 1980 (Table 1).

For the Moses Lake area, there appears to have been an abrupt increase in ER visits on May 24, 1980. This coincides with the beginning of clean-up efforts. Between May 18 and May 23 the residents were advised by state officials to stay indoors. The reasons for the increased ER visits are now being investigated.

A team headed by Russell Ephraim, M.D., has departed for Moses Lake to re-view these ER visits. The team will also conduct a field survey of approximately 200 families to collect additional information on potential health problems in that area.

Table 1. Daily hospital emergency room visits for the Moses Lake Area, in Washington, and the States of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, May 11-26, 1980.

Day of Week	Date	Moses Lake, Othello, Ritzville WA	Washington (other)	Idaho	Montana
Sunday	May 11	67	328	100	244
Monday	12	52	326	99	313
Tuesday	13	47	278	84	278
Wednesday	14	46	295	100	311
Thursday	15	46	282	72	271
Friday	16	52	294	85	228
Saturday	17	79	376	130	405
Sunday	18*	53	301	100	375
Monday	19	69	336	70	255
Tuesday	20	71	350	95	282
Wednesday	21	65	309	69	334
Thursday	22	74	330	90	299
Friday	23	75	280	91	336
Saturday	24	115	331	94	334
Sunday	25†	89	363	95	306
Monday	26	105	356	144	325

\*First volcanic eruption

†Second volcanic eruption

Table 2. Percent change in hospital emergency room visits between the weeks of May 11-17 and May 18-24, 1980.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Moses Lake Area</u>	<u>Washington (other)</u>	<u>Idaho</u>	<u>Montana</u>
May 11-17	389	2,179	670	2,050
18-24	522	2,237	609	2,215
Percent change	+34.2%	+2.7%	-9.1%	+8.0%

These health reports will be issued regularly on Tuesdays and Fridays and more frequently if necessary until the emergency ends. To be added to the mailing list, please contact:

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