

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE OPENING OF BUSINESSES

Re: Volcanic Ashfall

GENERAL INFORMATION

Ash varies in appearance depending upon the type of volcano and the form of the eruption. Thus, it can range in colour from light grey to black and can vary in size from being like grit to being as fine as talcum powder. Airborne ash blocks out sunlight, reducing visibility and sometimes causes complete darkness during daylight.

Volcanic ash is abrasive, making it an irritant to eyes, lungs, and skin. Ashfall can cause minor to major damage to vehicles and buildings, contaminate water supplies, disrupt sewage and electrical systems, and damage or kill vegetation. An increase in the number of persons with respiratory and eye symptoms during and after an ashfall event is highly anticipated.

Given the rapidly evolving situation, it is vital that you communicate frequently and effectively with stakeholders; this includes team members, trade unions and Safety Committees/Delegates to ensure understanding, co-operation, and compliance.

ANTICIPATED HAZARDS & ASSOCIATED RISKS

DIRECT SAFETY & HEALTH HAZARDS & ASSOCIATED RISKS OF ASHFALL

HAZARD	CONSEQUENCE / RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROLS TO BE EMPLOYED (TO BE PUT IN PLACE)
Ashfall particles in the eyes	Burning of eyes, redness, or discolouration, reduced temporary vision and pain.	Employees should continue to employ the use of face shields as being done at present to minimise the risks of transmission for COVID-19. Protective eye wear such as goggles may also be utilised.
Inhalation of ashfall	Respiratory issues such as asthma, sinusitis, allergies. Nasal irritation and discharge (runny nose). Throat irritation and sore throat, sometimes accompanied by dry coughing.	Employees should continue to employ the use of masks and face shields as being done at present to minimise the risks of transmission for COVID-19. High-risk employees with diagnosed respiratory issues should be encouraged to work from home where possible.
Ashfall on the skin	Itching, skin irritation, redness, discolouration	Employees should utilise long clothing covering hands and feet; as far as is reasonably practicable when reporting to work. Head coverings should be used where possible as needed.

INDIRECT SAFETY & HEALTH HAZARDS & ASSOCIATED RISKS OF ASHFALL

HAZARD	CONSEQUENCE / RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROLS TO BE EMPLOYED (TO BE PUT IN PLACE)
Ashfall on the roads	Reduction in visibility from airborne ash alone may cause accidents. This danger is compounded by ash covered roads. Not only are road markings covered up, but thin layers of either wet or dry ash are very slippery, reducing traction which can cause accidents.	Employees should be encouraged to work from home where possible until ashfall starts to dissipate. Only where necessary should staff report to physical work plants.
Ashfall on the power and connectivity accesses	Ashfall can lead to power cuts. These may have implications for health due to lack of cooling or other infrastructural requirements that depend on electricity. Wet ash is conductive, so it is essential that safe operating procedures are stringently followed when cleaning power supply equipment. Connectivity access may be limited, interrupting communication chains.	All mediums of communication should be employed to remain in contact with team members; particularly for updates regarding changes and safety and health information.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUSINESSES

COMMUTE TO WORK

- Employers should so far as it is reasonably practicable, avoid large numbers of employees commuting to work. Where possible, employees should be encouraged to work from home.
- Employees who are unable to work from home should employ the use of long clothing covering hands and feet as far as is reasonably practicable when reporting to work. Head coverings should be used where possible as needed.
- Employees should continue to employ the use of masks and face shields as being done at present to minimize the risks of transmission for COVID-19. Particularly persons commuting by public transportation with transfers.
- Employees should be encouraged to maintain large distances from the vehicle in front of them and drive slowly.

VENTILATION

- Businesses should keep all doors and windows closed wherever possible. In these instances, ventilation requirements in accordance with the Safety and Health at Work Act (SHAW) should be maintained.
- Businesses should coordinate with AC Technicians and Safety Officer or Delegate for guidance on air quality and maintenance of the AC system.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Employers should ensure that employees undertaking duties outside and or on the road should be encouraged to use face shields, goggles, long sleeve and highly visible clothing, reflectors, and head coverings such as hats and helmets.
- Remind employees to traverse with all required medication. Employers are not advised to issue medication to employees unless medical supervision is provided.

SANITATION AND CLEANING

- Employers may implement foot dip disinfection tools at entrances to minimize the risk of employees tracking ash from outdoors into indoor work plants. The following considerations should be employed for foot dip disinfection tools:
 - Place foot dips at all main site entrances to ensure that all personnel and visitors use them.
 - Replace solution in accordance with disinfectant guidelines.
 - Coordinate foot dip usage with your Safety Officer or Delegate.
- Employers should encourage custodians to maintain regular cleaning practices for all entrance and exit areas.
- Employers should provide careful instructions and guidance to personnel responsible for cleanup of the volcanic ashfall. The following considerations should be employed for cleanup of the volcanic ashfall:
 - Place ashes in appropriate waste bags to avoid further safety and health issues.
 - Do not transport ash in compacting vehicles (garbage trucks). Ashes should be transported in open trucks.
 - Ashes should not be placed in trenches and drains as this can cause block waterways and result in flooding.
 - Clean up personnel should utilize the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Please continue to monitor credible information sources and the BEC will continue to provide guidance and updates on this rapidly evolving situation.

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