

REGIONAL

St. Helens spews ash, steam

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — An explosion of steam and ash Monday at Mount St. Helens apparently created a small mudflow, but no damage was reported and scientists said they had no evidence a bigger event was in the offing.

The explosion did, however, spew ash 30,000 feet into the air, scientists said. Drifting ash headed generally southeast, and reports of some ashfall came from as far away as The Dalles, about 65 miles southeast of the mountain, said Steve Brantley, a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Vancouver.

The explosion was recorded on volcano seismographs at 2:07 a.m. PST, said Chris Jonientz-Trisler, a research scientist at the University of Washington's seismology laboratory in Seattle.

The weather service in Seattle issued a flash-flood watch for people along the north fork of the Toutle River in Lewis, Cowlitz and Skamania counties, but canceled it at 7 a.m. Forecasters said flooding was not likely because of the relatively small amount of snow on the 8,364-foot mountain located about 100

miles south of Seattle.

Jonientz-Trisler said the explosion was "very minor, minor, minor" compared with the May 18, 1980 eruption that leveled 230 square miles of forest, left 57 people dead or missing and sent up an ash cloud that circled the globe.

"This kind of thing is more like the steam and ash explosions that occurred last winter in December and January," she said. "Any hazards should be fairly confined to the crater."

Scientists who monitor the volcano say there has been a gradual increase in small earthquakes at the volcano over the past three years. But there was no evidence they were associated with Monday's event, Jonientz-Trisler said.

"Whether there's a direct tie-in isn't real obvious," she said. "These little blasts don't really shed a whole lot of light on that."

In the past, swarms of larger earthquakes have occurred in the days before eruptions of Mount St. Helens.

On Monday, however, "there were some very, very tiny ones that didn't even register sufficiently to record a magnitude for them," she said.

BUNGEE

Continued from Page 5

ity's quest for new and greater adrenalin rushes.

The cords bungee jumpers entrust their lives to are considerably harder than the ones dad used.

Used to drop jeeps and tanks from cargo planes, each cord has a minimum holding strength of 1,500 pounds, Dale said. Dale uses a four-cord system.

Locking carabiners, and a seat-and-chest harness designed for mountain climbing, complete the system, which Dale said is rated at 6,000 pounds overall.

A 160-pound jumper falling 100 feet generates only about 400 pounds of force.

"I have back-up systems on my back-up systems," Dale said of his safety procedures, which he feels are a must for any high-risk activity.

The sport is apparently safe then, or at least safe enough to satisfy the approximately 300 University students who have jumped through Dale's operation.

One jumper described her jump as "the most terrifying feeling in the world. It was a good terrifying, not a bad terrifying."

What primitive urge is compelling packs of students to leap from bridges?

For most students, the reasons for bungee jumping can be boiled down to one: the quest for a new and better rush.

Bungee jumping offers an electrifying yet legal high that anyone can experience without societal backlash.

"They don't call it the 'elevator to hell' for nothing," said Tyler McKinley, a University junior.

Dale said he believes bungee jumping affects people long after their initial thrill.

"It has a potential to give people a whole different view of themselves," Dale said. "A lot of people don't see themselves as risk-takers. They see themselves living mundane lives ... trodding along, going to class."

The experience of jumping can shatter an existence that has stagnated like the Millrace, and help students live by the motto of the Oregon Bungee Masters: *carpe diem* - seize the day.

Dale, in an enlightened moment of bungee philosophy, quoted a Hopi Indian saying.

"When you have faced death directly, you are immortal for that moment," he said.

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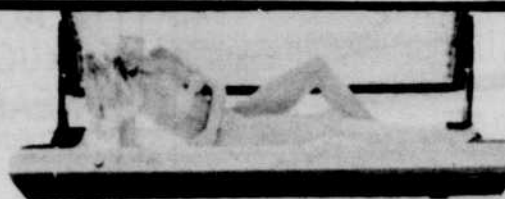
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