

**1SUPPORTING STATEMENT A
FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION**

**USGS ASHFALL REPORT
OMB Control Number 1028-0106**

Terms of Clearance: None

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

The mission of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Volcano Hazards Program (VHP) under the Disaster Relief Act (42 USC 5121-5170) is to enhance public safety and reduce losses from volcanic events through effective forecasts and warnings of volcanic hazards based on the best possible scientific information. The VHP conducts four major science activities to reduce volcanic risk in the Nation: (1) monitoring volcano unrest and eruption, (2) preparing volcano hazard assessments, (3) conducting research on volcanic processes, and (4) providing reliable forecasts, warnings, and volcano-hazard information.

The Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO) is a joint program of the USGS, the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAFGI), and the State of Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (ADGGS). AVO was formed in 1988, and uses federal, state, and university resources to monitor and study Alaska's hazardous volcanoes, to predict and record eruptive activity, and to mitigate volcanic hazards to life and property.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection. Be specific. If this collection is a form or a questionnaire, every question needs to be justified.

Response:

This project utilizes a database module and web interface that allow both the public and AVO staff to submit ashfall reports in real time or retrospectively following an eruptive event. During eruptions, visitors to the AVO website are directed to a web form where they can enter ashfall details and submit them electronically.

The USGS uses real-time reports from respondents to refine ashfall forecasts as ash clouds move downwind. Retrospective reports help improve ashfall models and support research into eruptive processes. The public benefits directly because accurate advisory statements inform communities where ash is falling and what actions to take to reduce impacts. In some cases, AVO scientists may use qualitative descriptions

provided by the public in publications, identifying contributors only as “an observer” with generalized location information.

This system significantly reduces staff time compared to previous methods, which relied on phone and email submissions during eruptions. By providing an easy, accessible reporting mechanism, the online form encourages greater participation and streamlines the entire process—from data collection to analysis and summarization.

The questions on the form can be grouped into four categories:

1) Location of the ashfall event:

Respondents provide the time, date, and location of their observation. Location details include address, city, state, zip code, additional GPS information, and latitude/longitude coordinates derived from an interactive map on the reporting form. Accurate location data is critical for verifying observations and ensuring data quality, particularly when reports appear inconsistent or questionable.

2) Observation Characteristics:

Respondents are asked to provide key details about their observation, including when ashfall began and ended, the thickness of the ash layer, prevailing weather conditions, and the type of sample collected. These data are essential for issuing accurate hazard advisories and validating ashfall models, which in turn improve forecast reliability for future eruptions.

3) Basic Contact information:

Providing contact details—such as name, email, and phone number—is optional. Respondents are also asked to indicate whether we may contact them for additional information. This approach ensures privacy is respected and helps respondents anticipate any follow-up communication regarding their observations.

4) Taking and submitting a physical ashfall sample:

This optional step provides an opportunity to gather more detailed information about the ashfall event. Physical samples help us analyze the composition, volume, and dispersal patterns of volcanic ash. Because ashfall can cover large areas and deposits are often ephemeral (due to erosion by wind, water, human activities), timely collection is critical—and frequently challenging for AVO staff. Local individuals are ideally positioned to collect high-quality samples quickly, ensuring valuable data for scientific analysis

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means

of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden and specifically how this collection meets GPEA requirements.

This project uses a database module and web interface that enable electronic submission of ashfall reports by both the public and Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO) staff. To address the significant staff time previously required to collect this information in person, by phone, or by email, we developed an efficient online system for gathering ashfall observations and recording AVO's own accounts. Individuals may also submit paper-based observations by downloading instructions and datasheets from our website. Physical ashfall samples can only be submitted by mail.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

No other organization gathers this type of information at the national scale like USGS; nothing like this database exists.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

This collection does not impact small business or other small entities.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

Because AVO is located far from Alaska's volcanoes, observations from the public are essential for validating satellite data and numerical models that guide official ashfall advisory statements. The public serves as our "eyes on the ground," providing primary observations that significantly improve hazard messaging.

If this information is not collected, the USGS and DOI would be unable to fulfill the requirements of the Disaster Relief Act (42 USC 5121–5170). The electronic form greatly reduces the reporting burden on both the public and AVO staff and ensures faster data submission. By making the form available online 24/7 nationwide, we can reach a broader audience and increase participation.

During an eruption, this information is immediately accessible to AVO staff in the Operations Room, enabling timely communication of ashfall timing and amounts to the National Weather Service for updates to public Ashfall Advisory statements.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- * **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly; Not applicable; all responses are voluntary**
- * **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it; Not applicable**
- * **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document; Not applicable**
- * **requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years; Not applicable**
- * **in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study; Not applicable**
- * **requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB; Not applicable**
- * **that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; Not applicable or**
- * **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information, unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law. Not applicable**

There are no circumstances that require us to collect the information in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the *Federal Register* of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and in response to the PRA statement associated with the collection over the past three years, and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every three years — even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

[Responses to question 8 need to include two sections – section 1 pertains to the

publication of the 60-day Notice and section 2 pertains to the required outreach]

On March 3, 2026, we published a 60-Day *Federal Register* notice (91 FR 10408) We did not receive any comments in response to that notice.

In addition to the *Federal Register* notice, we consulted the following individuals who are familiar with this collection of information in order to validate our time burden estimates and asked for feedback on the system/tool. We refer to each respondent by their affiliated agency rather than by name:

<p>Earth Observatory of Singapore <i>Suggestions for improvement:</i> Include links to the Ashfall Impacts website: https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanic_ash/ <i>Response:</i> We plan to include this link on the website.</p>
<p>University of Canterbury, New Zealand <i>Suggestions for improvement:</i> Add a link to Is Ash Falling to the Alaska Met service website for wider use. <i>Response:</i> we have made this request.</p>
<p>Massey University, New Zealand <i>Suggestions for improvement:</i> still think we need a phone application or the ability for "Is Ash Falling?" to work (scale on a phone) to encourage its use. <i>Response:</i> Our programming team has concerns about the requirement for frequent updates to apps should we make this a phone application, so we have updated the forms to scale to users screens including phones, tablets and computers.</p>
<p>University of Louvain, Belgium <i>Suggestions for improvement:</i> allow photos to be uploaded with their automated metadata embedded in images. <i>Response:</i> our IT team does not have a secure way to allow photo uploads at this time.</p>

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

On the last webform, we state the following:

****No personally identifiable information will be distributed; all personally identifiable information will be used internally by the Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO). AVO scientists may use some of the information that you enter in qualitative description fields in publications; you would be identified as "an observer" and your location given in general terms. Parts of some first-person accounts may be reproduced as quotations in AVO publications. Location information will only be used to generally show the location of ashfall on maps and by the NWS to update their Ashfall Advisory statements. The AVO and NWS work collaboratively to track ashfall and all personally identifiable data will be kept internal to both agencies and not distributed. ****

If you click the checkbox below, an AVO scientist may contact you to ask more in-depth questions about your report.

- Can we call you for more information?

We do this to protect their privacy. We also limit the scale of the map view of their ashfall report to a city view so that the location of any report is only displayed at a city view, not a neighborhood and certainly not a house or specific location.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

This collection does not include sensitive or private questions.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- * Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.**
- * If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens.**
- * Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here.**

We estimate the annual dollar value of burden hours to be \$2,906, based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) News Release USDL-22-2307 (December 15, 2022), which provides average hourly compensation rates including benefits. The value used for individuals is:

- Average hourly wage: \$41.86

We anticipate approximately 200 individuals will submit ashfall reports via our webform during any given Cook Inlet eruption. Cook Inlet volcanoes are closest to population centers and typically erupt every 2–10 years, meaning we expect 0–200 responses in any given year. This estimate is based on historical call volumes during eruptions and consultations referenced in Question 8.

Individuals may submit multiple reports during an eruption if ashfall occurs more than once in their location. Eruptions in Alaska occur 0–2 times per year, based on historical activity patterns.

Although not required, respondents are encouraged to review the web and video instructions for collecting ashfall samples.

Participant / Activity	Number of Responses	Minutes per response	Hourly Pay Rate	Total Annual Burden Hours	Total Annual Burden Value
Review Web Instructions for collecting ashfall samples	200	10 minutes	\$41.86	33	\$1381
Watch tutorial video for collecting an ashfall sample	75	22 minutes	\$41.86	27	\$1130
Collect an ashfall sample	50	4 Minutes	\$41.86	3	\$126
Complete Collection Data Sheet	50	3 Minutes	\$41.86	3	\$126
Complete Web Observation Form	200	4 minutes	\$41.86	13	\$544
Total	575			79	\$3,307

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual non-hour cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected in item 12.)

*** The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life) and (b) a total operation, maintenance, and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information (including filing fees paid for form processing). Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs**

include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.

- * If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.
- * Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the Government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

Although not required, respondents may voluntarily collect an ashfall sample. We suggest supplies on our website for respondents to use to assist them with their collection. Most respondents are likely to already possess the items; however, they are listed below:

Non-Hour Cost Burden to Public			
Item	Cost*	Estimated Number of Respondents Expected to Use	Non-Hour Cost Burden
Postage**	\$0.78	50	\$39
Plastic zip lock bag	\$0.16	50	\$8
Ruler	\$1.29	50	\$65
Measuring tape	\$3.29	50	\$165
Permanent marking pen	\$1.29	50	\$65
Spatula, putty knife, or similar Implement	\$1.99	50	\$100
Container	\$1.33	50	\$67
Paper	\$.01	50	\$1
Tin foil	\$4.79	50	\$240
Cost Per Response***	\$14.93	Total Non-Hour Burden Cost	\$750

*Unit costs estimated from staples.com

**Cost of first class stamp increased

***This is the cost per response if a respondent must purchase each item before they collect a sample. Many of these items are already likely to be possessed by the respondent. Similarly, respondents who have already taken samples can likely

reuse many of the materials listed above.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal Government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

OPM SALARY TABLE 2026-AK was used to estimate hourly costs with a 1.6 multiplier for benefits (fully loaded hourly rate)

Position	Grade / Step	Hourly Rate	Annual Hrs by Fed	Fully Loaded Hr Rate	Total Labor Value
<i>Project Lead, Geologist</i>	13/8	\$71.12	40	\$113.79	\$4,552 (rounded)

The Total Federal Cost per year is \$4,552.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments in hour or cost burden.

There are no program changes or adjustments in hour burden. Cost burden increased by \$9 due to the increase in the price of a first class postage stamp.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Maps illustrating ashfall reports for individual explosions and entire eruptions (covering multiple ashfall events) will be displayed retrospectively on our website. These figures may also be published in peer-reviewed journals to summarize ashfall distribution during an eruption.

Some qualitative descriptions provided in the reporting forms may be included in publications, with respondents identified only as “an observer” and their location described in general terms. Portions of first-person accounts may be quoted in AVO publications, but only with the respondent’s explicit permission.

Location information will be used solely to depict ashfall distribution on maps and by the National Weather Service (NWS) to update Ashfall Advisory statements.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the

information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the topics of the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."

There are no exceptions.