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Explosive volcanoes also cause deadly mudflows or lahars. The strong and fast lahar rolls downhill clearing everything in its path.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELENA KALISTRATOVA, SHUTTERSTOCK



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Volcano

Everything you need to know about volcanoes.

BY RUTH A. MUSGRAVE

How Volcanoes Form

In 1980 in Washington, after 123 years of hibernation, **Mount St. Helens** erupted. The blast destroyed and scorched 230 square miles (370 square kilometers) of forest within minutes. The eruption released an avalanche of hot ash, gas, steam, and rocks that mowed down giant trees up to 15 miles (24 kilometers) away.

When magma finds a way to escape from beneath the earth's surface, it creates a volcano.

Volcanoes erupt in different ways. Some, like Mount St. Helens, explode. **Explosive eruptions** are so powerful, they can shoot particles 20 miles up (32 kilometers), hurl 8-ton boulders more than a half mile (0.8 kilometers) away, and cause massive landslides. Explosive eruptions also create an avalanche of hot volcanic debris, ash, and gas that bulldozes everything in its path.

Explosive volcanoes cause most of the volcano-related fatalities.

Volcanoes, like **Mauna Loa in Hawaii, are effusive. Rather than a violent explosion, lava pours or flows out.**

Fatalities from **effusive volcanoes are rare because people can usually outrun the lava. However, some people get too close or become trapped with no escape. The flowing lava burns, melts, and destroys everything it touches including farms, houses, and roads.**

A volcanic eruption forever changes the landscape. Though volcanoes destroy, they also create mountains, islands, and, eventually, incredibly fertile land.

