

2 small eruptions occur at Alaska volcano

March 25 2009, By MARY PEMBERTON , Associated Press Writer



This photo released by the Alaska Volcano Observatory / U.S. Geological Survey shows a webcam image of Mount Redoubt at 8:43p.m. Alaska Daylight Time Monday March 23, 2009 near Kenai, Alaska. The volcano has been erupting starting Sunday night March 22, 2009, sending an ash cloud an estimated 50,000 feet into the air. The Ash cloud is expected to reach the Susitna Valley including Talkeetna, and Willow about 90 miles north of Anchorage. (AP Photo/ Alaska Volcano Observatory / U.S. Geological Survey)

(AP) -- Alaska's Mount Redoubt erupted at least twice Wednesday as officials from a pipeline company assessed conditions at a nearby oil storage facility to determine whether to remove its contents.

The Cook Inlet Pipeline Co., which is partly owned by Chevron Corp., was planning to look at whether a pumping system could be used to offload 6.2 million gallons of oil stored in two tanks, if Chevron decided to remove it.

[Pipeline contractor](#) Lana Johnson said Chevron has made no decision and that an airplane runway next to the facility was covered with debris and was unusable until cleared.

"Right now, nothing can happen, because you can't bring any equipment in, because the runway is closed," Johnson said.

The small eruptions Wednesday were picked up by seismic monitors, which showed that a 10-minute blast occurred after 5 a.m. at the volcano about 100 miles southwest of Anchorage. That eruption emitted an [ash plume](#) about 15,000 feet high that drifted to sparsely populated areas to the north and northwest, the same direction as earlier explosions since [Mount Redoubt](#) began erupting Sunday night.

A second eruption about five hours later did not emit an ash cloud detected by radar, which meant ash did not rise above 12,000 feet.

Geologists said volcano-caused mud flows and flooding would remain a hazard in the Drift River valley, where the Cook Inlet oil facility is located. Johnson said a Tuesday assessment found no damage to the [oil tanks](#) or a cement dike around the farms but that the terminal building was flooded. The facility had evacuated all 11 people from the site Monday.

The terminal, which was built in the 1960s by Unocal, stores oil produced from Chevron-owned [oil platforms](#) in Cook Inlet. Chevron is redirecting oil that would have been bound for Drift River to two other facilities.

The company is working on a contingency plan for when those storage facilities reach capacity, expected to be in 10 days, spokeswoman Roxanne Sinz said.

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