

Cloud over Mount Rainier stirs panic after people mistake it for sign of eruption

September 8 2022, by Helena Wegner



Credit: Stan Shebs, CC BY-SA 3.0 , via Wikimedia Commons

An alarming video of what appeared to be volcanic activity at Mount Rainier left people wondering if the volcano would erupt.

But Washington officials quickly took to Twitter to explain what was actually happening.

A video, first posted at 9:43 a.m. on Wednesday by a KOMO meteorologist, shows something billowing over Mount Rainier.

It was captioned, "Mt. Rainier appears to be venting."

But United States Geological Survey Volcanoes confirmed in a tweet the [volcano](#) was not erupting. And the Washington Emergency Management Division also posted, "This is NOT a eruption."

"The sort of behavior seen in this video is not unusual," the USGS wrote.

The geologists confirmed the volcano wasn't venting—it was just a cloud, the agency said.

Mount Rainier National Park Service also looked at webcams, confirming the "activity" over the volcano was in fact a lenticular cloud.

Lenticular clouds typically occur when "stable moist air flows over a mountain or a range of mountains," creating a UFO-looking shape, according to EarthSky.

People have often mistaken this weather phenomenon for UFOs, but this time the cloud stirred up fear of a volcanic eruption.

Field teams were on Mount Rainier installing a new volcano monitoring station when the video of "[volcanic activity](#)" began circulating on [social media](#), park officials said in a news release. They confirmed there wasn't activity on the mountain.

Park officials also looked at [seismic data](#) and did not find signs of

"unusual levels of activity."

"Videos shown are not what folks think," the Washington Emergency Management Division tweeted.

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