

Ash from Russian volcano prompts Alaska flight cancellations

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Alaska Airlines canceled more than two dozen flights in its namesake state Thursday because of an ash cloud from a volcano in Russia that drifted into Alaska, the Seattle-based airline said.

The ash cloud is from Shiveluch Volcano, the airline said. By midday Thursday, 28 flights to, from and within Alaska were canceled.

"We continue to monitor the ash cloud, and depending on its location, movement and timing, we might need to cancel additional flights," the airline said in a statement. It encouraged travelers to check the status of their flights online.

Among those affected was U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, an Alaska Democrat, whose overnight flight from Honolulu to Anchorage was canceled, Dillingham, Alaska, radio station KDLG reported. Sam Erickson, a Peltola spokesperson, declined comment to The Associated Press.

The ash cloud drifted over Alaska air space in the last few days, the Alaska Volcano Observatory said in a statement. "Although this cloud poses a potential hazard to aviation and has disrupted some flights, no ashfall is expected on Alaska communities," it said.

Shiveluch, one of Kamchatka Peninsula's most active volcanoes, started erupting early Tuesday, spewing ash more than 300 miles (500 kilometers) northwest. Several Russian villages were covered in grey volcanic dust in the largest fallout in nearly 60 years.

On Wednesday, the eruption sent an ash cloud more than 6 miles (10 kilometers) into the air. The volcano is about 1,772 miles (2,772 kilometers) west of Anchorage.

Volcanic ash is angular and sharp and has been used as an industrial abrasive. The powdered rock can cause a jet engine to shut down.

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