

Scientists find that lightning is good indicator of volcanic activity

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Following the initial eruptions of Alaska's Mount Augustine Jan. 11 and 13, 2006, scientists found that lightning was produced and two electromagnetic lightning detectors were set up about 60 miles away in Homer. Credit: Image courtesy of the Alaska Volcano Observatory

Although it's been more than a year since Mount Augustine had its memorable eruption, work continues for University of Alaska Fairbanks researchers. The work of Alaska Volcano Observatory employees from UAF's Geophysical Institute will be appearing in the upcoming issue of the journal *Science*.

The article, which came out on Feb. 23, documents electrical activity that occurred during the January 2006 eruption of Mount Augustine. While it has long been known that volcanic eruptions can produce vigorous lightning, there are few direct observations of the phenomena, states the article.

Following the initial eruptions of Jan. 11 and 13, 2006, two of which produced lightning, two electromagnetic lightning detectors were set up in Homer about 60 miles from Augustine. A couple of days later, the volcano erupted again, with the first of four eruptions producing a "spectacular lightning sequence."

The conclusions, according to Volcano Seismologist Steve McNutt, who is a research professor of geophysics at UAF and co-author of the article, is that in addition to the current means that seismologists employ in determining volcanic eruptions. As a result of this research, plans are under way to install a simple lightning detector on Mount Cleveland this summer.

Source: University of Alaska Fairbanks

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