

Part Two – Critical Areas

Volcanic Hazard Areas

Volcanic hazards as addressed by King County are largely restricted to potential mudflows along stream drainages originating on Mt. Rainier. The White River upstream of Mud Mountain Dam is particularly affected. The White River downstream of the Mud Mountain Dam and other parts of the Green and Duwamish River basins are similarly affected but to a lesser degree. Other hazards related to an eruption of Mt. Rainier, such as ash falls, are not addressed by the King County Zoning Code.

The single most important section of the volcanic hazards regulation is the statement at the end of the section that says, “This section shall not become effective until King County has completed the required modeling and mapping of volcanic hazard areas.” Although federal and state agencies have made some progress in volcanic hazard mapping and modeling, such work has not been done by King County and the county does not recognize other agencies' work as sufficient to fulfill the code requirement for mapping and modeling. Hence, there are effectively no development restrictions with respect to volcanic hazard areas.

Development standards

For volcanic hazard areas located along the White River upstream of the Mud Mountain Dam, the King County Zoning Code requires that:

- No critical facilities, apartments, townhouses, or commercial structures be allowed;
- All new lots created by subdivision, short subdivision, or binding site plan shall designate building areas and building setbacks outside of the volcanic hazard areas; and
- Notice of critical areas is required for new single detached dwellings on existing lots.

For volcanic hazard areas along the White River downstream from the Mud Mountain Dam and along the Green and Duwamish Rivers, the department shall evaluate development proposals for critical facilities for risk of inundation or flooding resulting from mudflows originating on Mt. Rainier. Critical facilities shall be designed to withstand, without damage, the effects of mudflows equal in magnitude to the prehistoric electron mudflow.

Allowed alterations

Effectively, all alterations are allowed without meeting any of the above development standards because the volcanic hazard areas restrictions are not yet in effect. King County has no current plans to complete the required volcanic hazard mapping.