

Mount St. Helens eruption imminent

A major eruption of the Mount St. Helens volcano seems likely after a modest steam burst and harmonic volcanic tremors followed swarms of small earthquakes. Volcanic gas emissions and the movement of magma within the mountain have raised the likelihood of a more explosive eruption



The 1980 magma eruption killed 60 people, flattened 390km² of forests and sent clouds of gritty ash 22km into the stratosphere

Lava dome: 280m high, 1.1km diameter. Formed in crater by extrusions of thick, pasty lava between 1982-86

Magma chamber: Gas-rich magma may have ascended to shallow levels, threatening a large, sustained **plinian** magma eruption

Cone interior: Cinder and clay rather than hard rock. Rainwater may have seeped through, resulting in steam-driven **phreatic** eruption of ash accompanied by mud flows

